Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-FIVE • NUMBER THREE • MARCH 1988

Reagan's Rush to Disarm

Patrick Glynn

As I See Gorbachev

Natan Sharansky

Inventing Hebrew Prose

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Do Spies Matter?

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No Pulitzer for Pinsker—A Story

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Why Johnny Is Ignorant

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Books in Review

Donald Kagan / Wilfred M. McClay / Carter Cooper / Nicholas N. Eberstadt / James W. Tuttleton

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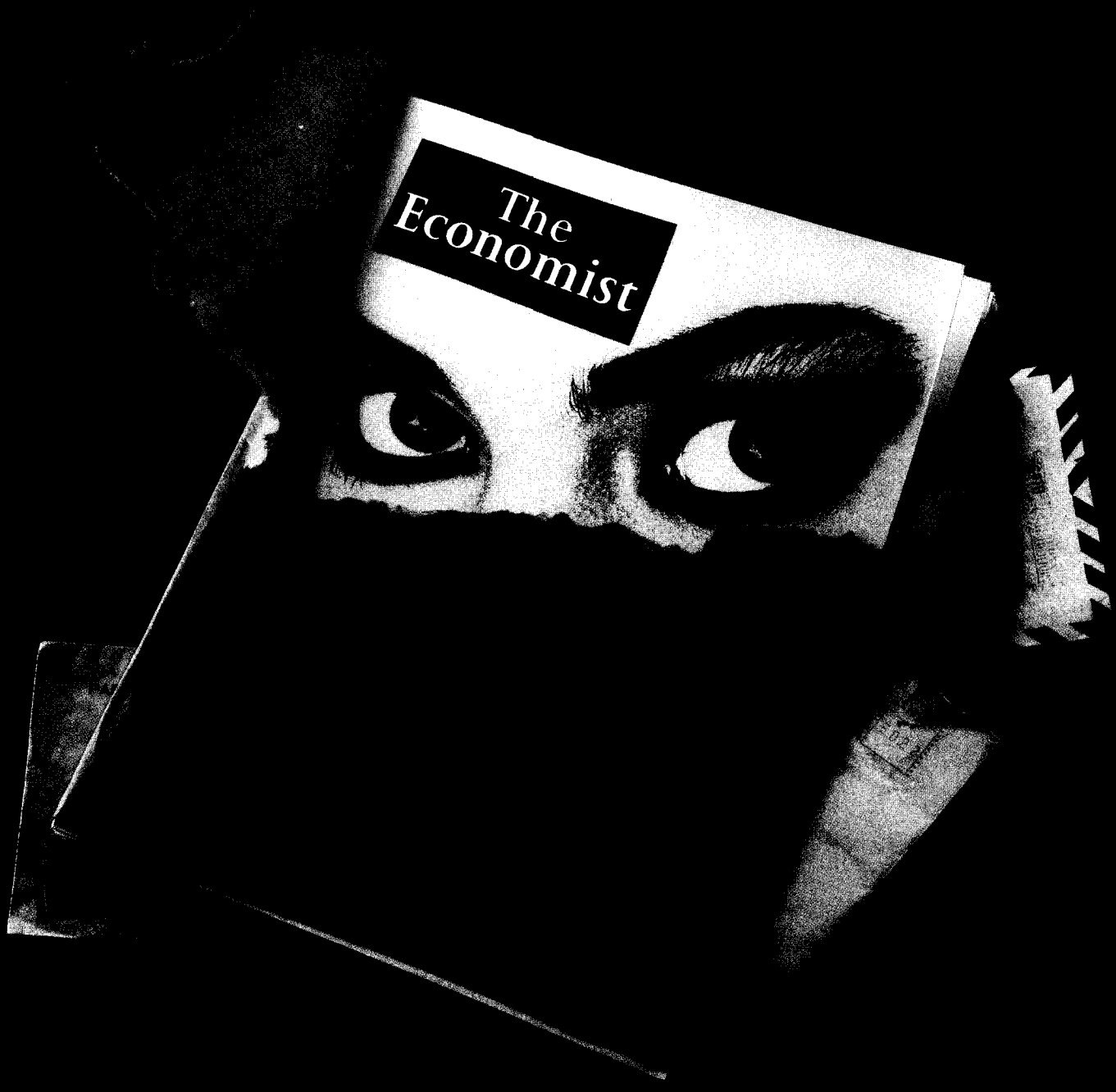

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Letters from Readers

Conversion

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It was with great shock and even outrage that I read Roger Owen's description of his Orthodox conversion ["On Becoming a Jew," November 1987]. I am appalled that someone could be so dishonest about such a serious matter, and then have the nerve to write about it as though he were proud of his ability to deceive so well. I am even more appalled by the corrupt nature of the Orthodox rabbi who was the head of Mr. Owen's *Beth Din*, the rabbinical court which performed the conversion.

I myself am a recent convert to Orthodox Judaism. My motives were solely of a spiritual nature; I did not, and do not, have a Jewish partner. My own conversion process consisted of two-and-a-half years of study, classes, and discussions (often uncomfortable and challenging) with an Orthodox rabbi, with whom I developed a personal relationship. When I finally came before the *Beth Din* (three rabbis the first time and eight rabbis the second time!), my feelings, sincerity, and commitment—to Orthodoxy, not just to Judaism in general—were examined with a fine-tooth comb.

It is not out of jealousy or resentment that I criticize Mr. Owen's conversion process. Rather, I believe that such "quickie" conversions benefit no one in the long run—not him, not his Jewish wife or in-laws (even though they may think it does), not Orthodoxy, and certainly not the Jewish people as a whole, who are currently embroiled in the very divisive issue of "Who is a Jew?"—i.e., the validity of non-halakhic conversions under Israel's Law of Return.

I cannot identify with Mr. Owen's attitude that he "wanted to get the business over with quickly." He tells us he "most wished to avoid . . . being obliged to sustain for a lengthy period an appearance of moral or religious commitment." How horrible that he should have to show any commitment to the religion which he was pretending to adopt! A lengthy conversion process does, I can say from experience, ground one in a firm and solid Jewish identity.

The biggest irony, of course, is that Mr. Owen was able to have an Orthodox conversion in two weeks, after turning down a Reform conversion that would have taken a year. The Reform rabbi (to his credit) insisted on a year of study, participation in discussions (on such horrid topics as "Judaism and Feminism"—which Mr. Owen considers a waste of time), and an involvement in synagogue life. Mr. Owen refers to these as "formidable demands"—especially since the rabbi was not even willing to dispense with circumcision in exchange.

Mr. Owen tells us that his Orthodox conversion was "arranged," a simple matter of politics, of knowing the right people. "My 'sincerity' was more or less taken for granted," he writes. "No one asked me directly, for example, whether I believed in God." . . .

His rabbi (the extent of their relationship was "two long conversations") participated with him in his deception. Mr. Owen writes that "the nature of my motives in converting [marriage and pressure from in-laws] was dealt with in . . . a relatively perfunctory way . . . neither he nor I mentioned the subject. . . . The convention that I had been seized in middle age by the universal truth of Judaism was scrupulously maintained, and by both of us." . . .

Mr. Owen states that "the course of action I had undertaken had much about it which had seemed to me dishonest." No wonder. Yet all his questions about this dishonesty focus on himself—was he selling out, was he untrue to himself, etc.? Never does he ask if he is doing an injustice to Judaism or the Jewish people by undergoing a deceptive conversion. . . . He nevertheless justifies his deception and dishonesty. In Judaism, he says, "obedience to the God-given Law is the first requirement . . . motives are of secondary importance." This is true in regard to the *mitzvot* (commandments)—it is most important to *do* them; *why* one does them and how one *feels* about doing them are secondary. But Mr. Owen mistakenly uses this principle to rationalize the insincere motives of his conversion; after all, the proper procedures were followed.

In an Orthodox—or, it would be more accurate to say, halakhic—conversion, the convert is asked,

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upon immersion in the *mikveh*, the ritual bathhouse, if he will observe the 613 *mitzvot* according to Halakhah. Mr. Owen wrongly thinks that his conversion was not dependent on "whether or not I 'meant' them [the words]. Nor for that matter did the rabbi's private knowledge of those motives appear to alter the factuality or validity of what had taken place."

Unfortunately for Roger Owen, this is not true. Talk is not cheap in Judaism. *Lashon hara*, malicious talk, is a grave offense; most of the sins we confess on Yom Kippur are sins of the mouth. One cannot convert to a religion that prohibits lying by lying. It is not enough that he was circumcised at age forty-eight (this is, after all, not a male initiation rite!) or that he reimmersed himself in the *mikveh* because he "touched the side" the first time. According to Jewish law, his *Beth Din* is invalid, his conversion is invalid, and he is not a Jew. Thus even the title of his article, "On Becoming a Jew," is a deception, for because of his dishonesty he did *not* become a Jew.

As much as I have taken Mr. Owen to task, the more serious issue is his rabbi, his Orthodox rabbi who heads an Orthodox *Beth Din* in New York, a city which has more Jews than the entire state of Israel. Can Orthodox rabbis discredit Conservative and Reform conversions while they, or their colleagues, perform conversions such as this? Which is worse, a sincere convert who loves Judaism and does not go to the *mikveh*, or a fabricator who goes through all the proper physical and technical motions?

JUDITH S. ANTONELLI
Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Roger Owen treats us to a most revealing and fascinating account of his conversion, and then presents a thoughtful analysis of his experience. His concern is to show that although he was motivated by other than religious convictions, he did not in any way compromise his personal integrity in undergoing religious conversion procedures. On the contrary, he reads much meaning into the careful attention to Jewish law given to the requirements of the conversion ceremony: circumcision and immersion in the *mikveh*.

But while he has much to say about motivation and sincerity, the reasons for undertaking the conversion, and the ceremony itself, he tells us relatively little about the consequences of the conversion. He does inform us that the validity of his conversion held up under testing and questioning. He also tells us that he now thinks "Jewish," that he feels a connection with Jewish values and Jewish destiny, a connection with the Jewish people and with Israel, where he lives with his family.

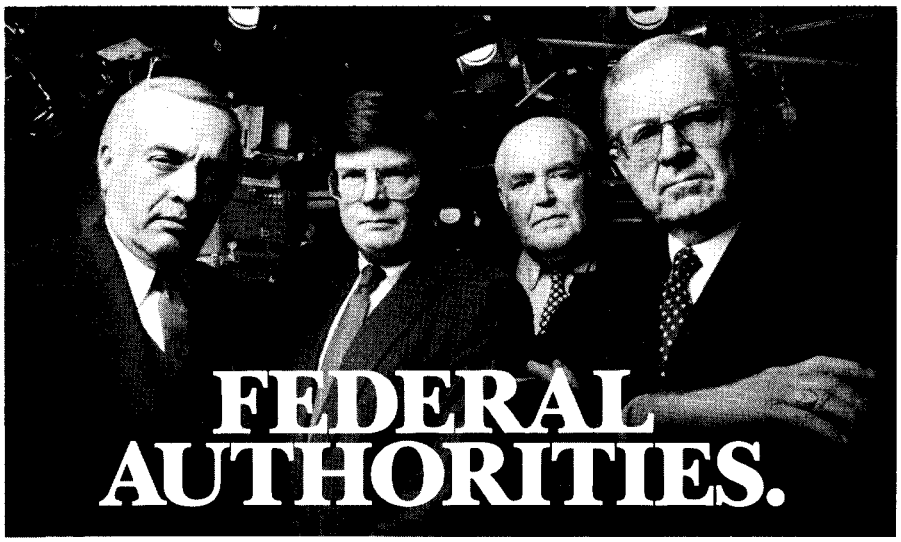
All this is wonderful, truly admirable, but what about his religious outlook and practice? He says nothing about Torah, or about the observance of the *mitzvot*. The impression is that all the necessary attention to Torah was taken care of by the blood on the Kleenex and the immersions. Mr. Owen's conversion in reality was not to Judaism, but to some sort of Jewishness. Yet it seems that a man of his evident intellect and character would recognize that the only way for a non-Jew to become a full Jew is to accept and observe the *mitzvot*. Or does he really want to justify the attitude expressed to him by his future brother-in-law in trying to persuade him to convert: "'Just do it. *You don't have to believe it*'"?

[RABBI] SOLOMON WEINBERGER
Passaic, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Roger Owen correctly describes and understands the emphasis Orthodox Judaism places on actions versus beliefs or motivations. However, this is not the complete story. The talmudic formula upon which this concept is based reads, "It is good to perform *mitzvot* without sincere motivation so that by acting without motivation you will come to act with motivation." The starting point is action. Behavior molds character. But such a *mitzvah*, devoid of motivation and inner meaning, is clearly crippled. It is only a practical first step, designed to lead to a second step.

The statement by Mr. Owen that "Right behavior might lead to a desirable inner state, but it is anyway virtuous in itself," is certainly not descriptive of Orthodox Judaism. And to the extent that this attitude describes individual "Orthodox" Jews, I would label this a corruption, not a "pragmatic" accommodation. Even the first level



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of the talmudic formula, performing *mitzvot* without inner content, is understood (and codified) to refer to subtle meanings and symbolisms. Every *mitzvah* must still be done with sincerity and the intention that it is a fulfillment of a command. Mr. Owen's supposition that the efficacy of the words he uttered in the *mikveh* "was not dependent on whether or not I 'meant' them," is incorrect from the standpoint of Orthodox Judaism.

Secondly, and more fundamentally, I am not sure of the meaning of Orthodox Judaism. I think of myself as Orthodox (I am a rabbi also significantly involved in conversions), and for me, Orthodoxy is an approach to binding Halakhah that recognizes a specific methodology and range of opinion as legitimate and is based on the *Shulhan Arukh* and its major commentaries. Orthodoxy is not monolithic. Differences of opinion are natural but must be within the system to be legitimate.

Thus understood, the "Orthodox" conversion reported by Mr. Owen, notwithstanding the participation of "Orthodox" rabbis with beards and long black coats who insisted on minutiae of Halakhah ("was there blood on the needle?, did he touch the sides?"), and that it took place in Flatbush, was certainly not executed in accordance with Halakhah, that is, was certainly not Orthodox.

"I inferred that immersion and circumcision were the two most important requirements. . . . No one asked me directly . . . whether I believed in God." And, presumably, no one determined whether he would lead a halakhically observant way of life after the procedure. And yet this is precisely the primary issue. The preponderance of halakhic sources makes it clear that such winking of the eye is blatant hypocrisy, and makes for an invalid procedure. And for a rabbi to ignore, as Mr. Owen reports, a known motive for conversion, when that motive should contraindicate conversion, is blatantly not Orthodox.

I am always pleased when someone is favorably impressed with Orthodoxy. But I should at least be able to recognize what is being praised. Here, I cannot.

[Rabbi] Michael Whitman
Young Israel of New Haven
New Haven, Connecticut

To the Editor of Commentary:

Roger Owen may now be Jewish, but how Jewish were those who with such speed brought him into the faith? Is dissimulation in keeping with Jewishness? . . . Mr. Owen should also know that the reaction of the British Liberal rabbi he encountered is not necessarily representative of the way other Reform rabbis would have handled the situation.

[Rabbi] Samuel M. Silver
Temple Sinai
Delray Beach, Florida

To the Editor of Commentary:

Roger Owen's "On Becoming a Jew" seemed to bear a curious relationship to Philip Roth's story, "Eli the Fanatic," which appeared in your pages a long, long time ago [April 1959]. Mr. Owen's story brought at least one vexing question into focus for philosophically-minded Jews (and, I might as well add, Protestants and Catholics).

Simply put, reformist trends in contemporary religious thought have seemed to shift . . . toward a reflective life in which the divinity has been transmuted into an abstraction—ambiguous, nonjudgmental, understanding, and forgiving. . . .

But once freed of the responsibility to live by the commandments, we may . . . be embarking on an endless odyssey that has no terminus. We continue to seek comfort through an intellectual maze that in the end, in the language of the Kabbalah, is "*ein sof*," without end.

If the serenity of the soul asks that we center our lives as the Orthodox do on strict adherence to and observance of the *mitzvot*, then indeed Orthodox Judaism offers a center to hold us together. But the reflective mind rebels. We seek centeredness, but not at the expense of the prescribed obedience to the *mitzvot*, which may program our lives but in which we forfeit our minds. . . . It seems an ironic Faustian exchange.

I was immensely charmed by Mr. Owen's soulful acceptance of his conversion. I was also pleased with his candor as a reflective and profoundly civilized man. I will remember his story for a long time.

Charles Ansell
Sherman Oaks, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

The most telling of Roger Owen's observations is the insight that good deeds need not be preceded by but can still lead to right knowledge. This important bit of Jewish wisdom should be heeded by those who remain reluctant to welcome converts. The lesson from this article is that even hasty conversions for questionable motives can lead finally to a genuine spiritual encounter and to the convert's becoming a good Jew. Stories such as Mr. Owen's should remind us that Judaism's appealing and profound truths ought to be available for all who seek them.

Lawrence J. Epstein
Stony Brook, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

Like Roger Owen, I converted to Judaism in Brooklyn, New York. Unlike Mr. Owen, two years later, I converted again—this time in the Bronx. My first conversion was much like his—nominally Orthodox but rather perfunctory, done without apparent attention to the role Halakhah played in my daily life. My second conversion was, however, tremendously exacting. The need for a second conversion was, I believe, an indirect result of the seismic shocks felt in the Jewish community from the "Who is a Jew?" controversy. Mr. Owen's experience of reflecting on the nature and value of Halakhah and the halakhic life only *after* his conversion is, I suspect, increasingly rare, at least among Orthodox converts in New York.

I should state at the outset that I did not in any way resent the second conversion—in fact, I suspected it would be necessary even before I underwent the conversion in Brooklyn, and I welcomed the opportunity to become unquestionably Jewish. Still, the dislocations it has caused have been enormous. At the time of the first conversion, I was a New York lawyer with a Jewish fiancé, a seemingly lifelong attraction to Jews and things Jewish, and a rather secular way of life. Two years later, I was still a New York lawyer—now with a Jewish husband—but I was now myself an observant Jew. During my journey, which has not yet ended, I had to put many of Mr. Owen's reflections into practice.

Interestingly, immediately after my second conversion, I began to indulge in post-conversion soul-searching similar to Mr. Owen's, but my focus was somewhat different. By the time I converted again, I knew that Judaism means adherence to Torah law, and that such adherence (somewhat paradoxically,

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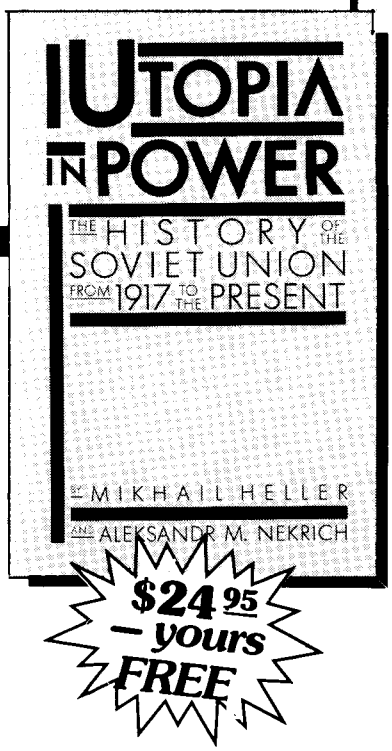

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perhaps) means intense attention to mundane considerations. But for me, the identity conflicts (to which Mr. Owen pays minimal attention) have become paramount. Indeed, I began to wrestle with the question of Jewish identity only after I knew I was really, truly, and irretrievably Jewish. I believe this is because after the struggle to become Jewish was over, I recognized (with some surprise) that, in addition to being a committed Jew, I remained a hardworking New York professional, a proud American, and part of a rewarding secular world that I loved, and that being all these things at once would not always be easy. I suspect that these conflicting pulls of identity are by no means confined to converts, and are themselves very much a part of what it means to be a Jew, at least in the Diaspora.

MARIANNE SENDER
Bronx, New York

ROGER OWEN writes:

I am sorry that the story I told has so enraged Judith S. Antonelli. I doubt if there is much that I can say which is likely to soften her feelings of moral outrage, or to mitigate the holier-than-thou severity of her judgments. The motives for her own conversion, she complacently assures us, were "solely of a spiritual nature." My own, it is true, were not of this character. In the rarefied moral universe Miss Antonelli now inhabits, I therefore am damned.

For all her spirituality, Miss Antonelli shows no sign of sympathy or understanding for the many people who have found themselves in actual situations similar to my own —probably a majority of proselytes. For reasons which were no doubt intellectually and theologically questionable (as I myself clearly indicated) two sick and elderly people desperately wished me to take a course of action, the propriety of which caused me (though apparently not them) anxiety. I did what was asked of me, and found the process in some respects as "uncomfortable," I daresay, as that which Miss Antonelli endured. The outcome of my action was to afford them, to a degree I found moving, great relief and happiness.

In the "long run," says Miss Antonelli from her spiritual vantage point, these people were deluding themselves. Neither she nor I can speak with any certainty about the "long run." And I fail to understand why those elevated "long-run" considerations to which she refers (for the real interests of my parents-in-law; for "Orthodoxy"; for "the Jewish people") should have been uppermost in my own mind at the time, when they (or rather Miss Antonelli's view of them) were not shared by my parents-in-law, by my wife and her brother, and by the other Jews who urged, welcomed, and indeed participated in my action.

Let me add that in these circumstances I now feel little shame about what I did, but, on the other hand, Miss Antonelli has no right to accuse me of taking pride in, or of boasting about, my "ability to deceive." There is no evidence for this assertion in what I wrote.

I thank Rabbi Solomon Weinberger for his kind and temperate remarks. I do not dissent from his view that my conversion was "in reality . . . not to Judaism, but to some form of Jewishness," a condition which anyway takes multifarious forms. In the "reality" of my parents-in-law, for example, it symbolized my admission to the Jewish "family." In the "reality" of the state of Israel it enabled me to live here as an *oleh hadash*, a new immigrant. (My observance of the *mitzvot*—about which Rabbi Weinberger inquires, is, I concede, no more or less than that of the great majority of Israeli Jews. It is a regrettable fact—from many points of view—that the status of "secular Jew in Israel" is one that an outsider can only acquire by means of a religious conversion.)

I am pleased that Rabbi Michael Whitman believes that I correctly described and understood "the emphasis Orthodox Judaism places on actions versus beliefs or motivations." In my essay I made it clear that the speculations and inferences I allowed myself at the time were almost certainly exaggerated in this respect. Rabbi Whitman's interesting and persuasive letter is a valuable corrective, and I have neither the competence nor the desire to argue with what he says. I must take refuge in the fact that contemporary Judaism is pluralistic, and that while Rabbi Whitman speaks with evident authority, he does not do so *ex cathedra*.

Rabbi Samuel M. Silver says that the Liberal (Reform) rabbi I mentioned was not "representative." Also unrepresentative—so it appears from much of this correspondence—was the head of the *Beth Din* with whom I treated. It seems that it is the duty of the proselyte to ascertain in advance who *is* representative, and what they represent. "Who is a Jew?" is a question which exercises the attention of the Jewish world. "Who is a rabbi?" must tax the mind of the newcomer. It is a tall order.

I am flattered by the kind words of Charles Ansell and Lawrence J. Epstein and their letters require no comment from me. I found Marianne Sender's account of her own experience most interesting. The "conflicting pulls of identity" to which she refers are ones I understand, but as she herself hints in her final sentence, a solution exists for them.

Homosexuality

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Marjorie Rosenberg is, in the main, to be commended for her article, "Inventing the Homosexual" [December 1987]. She convincingly describes the process whereby the homosexual community proclaimed itself a politically oppressed minority and proceeded, amid the feverish, intimidating atmosphere of the late 1960's, with the help of some pseudo-scientific research, to induce the moral and scientific collapse of the American Psychiatric Association. Mrs. Rosenberg's article comes as welcome support of those of us who have been concerned about the social repercussions of this collapse, particularly on the campuses of liberal universities where a similar readiness to appease homosexual militants has been visible.

Mrs. Rosenberg is on firm ground as she analyzes events from the Kinsey report of 1948 to the present. But in order to reach this ground the reader must wade through four introductory paragraphs which are a morass of confusion and purple prose as Mrs. Rosenberg purports to sketch the history of homosexuality in Western culture. Apparently she believes it was late 19th-century science, and in particular psychoanalysis, which "invented the homosexual." Prior to that time there was no such thing as "the homosexual" in the sense of a discrete subculture, but only occasional homosexual "behavior," exercised as a moral choice, or a manifestation of free will, by individual humans—until Freud and his allies rounded them all up into

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the same scientific corral. We are to believe that the homosexuals did not self-consciously identify themselves as such until psychiatry, and in particular Freud, did so.

This is a formulation which turns reality upside down in the same dizzying manner Mrs. Rosenberg aptly perceives in the arguments offered by homosexual polemicists. Surely the most casual scanning of history will discern a self-conscious homosexual subculture in every society throughout Western history, whether feared as an abomination by Judeo-Christians or idealized by pagans or tolerated with some admixture of these two attitudes. Freud replaced these stereotypical views with a sophisticated and humane scientific approach, one which permits distinctions to be made among complex behaviors. Thus his contribution was precisely the *opposite* of that attributed to him by Mrs. Rosenberg. "Psychoanalytic research," he wrote in the *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1915), "is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of special character."

Indeed, Mrs. Rosenberg seems to go out of her way to repeat, using the most florid prose, the popular stereotypes and caricatures of psychoanalysis, as, for example, her reference to "the psychoanalytic vendetta against mothers." Our favorite sample of purple-prose history, though, runs as follows: "As 19th-century physics rendered solid objects into millions of dancing electrons, and Impressionist painters broke up a landscape into particles of refracted light and shade, so Freud—equally atomistic—reduced his patients to the details of their sexual histories."

Apart from the triplicate damage done to art, physics, and psychoanalysis by this wholesale conflation, surely we can hope for more from a practicing psychotherapist than the repetition of the familiar canard that Freud reduces everything to sex. For refutation we refer the reader to any of Freud's case histories. Not only psychoanalysis but perceptive cultural critics from Lionel Trilling to Harold Bloom have repeatedly pointed out the depth, complexity, and subtlety of Freud's psychology. Three minutes' thought by Mrs. Rosenberg would have sufficed to dispel this egregious cant. However, as A.E. Housman once remarked, "thought is irksome, and three minutes is a long time." . . .

By so introducing her article on homosexuality, Mrs. Rosenberg commits a disastrous error for a polemicist: she fails to distinguish supporting from opposing arguments and so totters on the brink of intellectual incoherence. Fortunately, she regains her footing sufficiently to make some excellent points about the absurdities of much current thinking on homosexuality.

STEPHEN M. RITTENBERG, M.D.
HERBERT M. WYMAN, M.D.
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Marjorie Rosenberg begins her article by correctly pointing out that there is something fundamentally misguided in categorizing people as homosexual. Even though this categorization is largely due to 19th-century physicians who wished to pathologize homosexuality (see Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, Part 1, Chapter 2), it is nowadays, according to Mrs. Rosenberg, a tool used by those who wish to legitimate homosexuality. Despite the fact that many gay-rights activists promote the notion of "gay identity," I think Mrs. Rosenberg has failed to understand the primary function of homosexual categorization or labeling. Contrary to her claim, it actually works to discourage homosexuality, as is explained in Mary McIntosh's article "The Homosexual Role" (*Social Problems*, vol. 16, 1968). According to McIntosh, homosexual labeling serves two functions:

> In the first place it helps provide a clear-cut, publicized, and recognizable threshold between permissible and impermissible behavior. This means that people cannot so easily drift into deviant behavior. Their first moves in a deviant direction immediately raise the question of a total move into a deviant role with all the sanctions that this is likely to elicit. Secondly, the labeling serves to segregate the deviants from others and this means that their deviant practices and self-justifications for these practices are contained within a relatively narrow group. The creation of a specialized, despised, and punished role of homosexual keeps the bulk of society clean in rather the same way that the similar treatment of criminals helps keep the rest of society law-abiding.

This may help explain an inconsistency in Mrs. Rosenberg's own article. If she questions the legitimacy of the homosexual label, one would expect her to refrain from describing people as "homosexual." But, in fact, she frequently refers to "homosexuals," blaming them for AIDS as well as the disintegration of Western civilization. The fact is, Mrs. Rosenberg's insight into psychotherapy, limited though it may be, has brought her to the correct realization that no one is homosexual, but her political agenda impels her to lapse back into the conventional way of speaking. By excoriating those perceived as homosexual or subjecting them to legal penalties, the rest of us are frightened into hiding our natural homosexual feelings. This explains why Mrs. Rosenberg continues to label people "homosexual" while holding them up to ridicule.

It is not healthy to quarantine the expression of homosexual feelings to a dark corner of society. Homosexuality must be integrated into society. Unfortunately, many believe that the best way to achieve this aim is by fostering a sense of "gay identity" among certain individuals. I strongly disagree. "Gay identity" is simply another form, albeit a relatively benign form, of the quarantine which removes the expression of homoerotic feelings from mainstream society. It must be made plain to all that, whether we choose to act on them or not, homosexual and heterosexual feelings are natural for everyone. They are natural by virtue of their very commonness. Homosexuality, while not procreative, does serve sexuality's other natural function: strengthening social bonds by bringing people together.

It is a black mark upon Western civilization that homosexuality has been so punitively suppressed, crippling its natural function. In the past two thousand years it has devolved from an accepted form of love . . . to a clandestine act shrouded in anonymity and fear. Pseudo-moralists such as Mrs. Rosenberg have been to blame all along. Her article's thinly disguised political agenda is an attempt to worsen a social climate in which a man can already lose his job, his social status, and even his life as a result of having an affair with another man. The irrationality and brutish immorality of such an attitude should be obvious. . . .

JOHN H. ROE
New York City

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To the Editor of Commentary:

As an attorney, it is my profession to formulate issues, present discussion, and leave it to judges and juries to render verdicts. Thus, I shall not render a verdict on "Inventing the Homosexual," but instead pose the following issue:

What, if any, is the interrelationship between the defense mechanism of denial and the desire of some people to see homosexuality as a matter of choice?

Denial is the defense mechanism whereby an individual substitutes a false belief for reality. This denial can relate to an inner reality or an external reality (based on *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense: The Writing of Anna Freud,* 1966).

When homosexuality is characterized as a matter of choice, then a person threatened by internal homosexual impulses can deny the implication of these impulses by saying that since he has never acted the homosexual, he is not a homosexual.

In Aristotelian terms, a person beset with inner homosexual desires can reason: All homosexuals choose to perform homosexual acts. I choose not to perform homosexual acts. Therefore, I am not a homosexual.

If, on the other hand, homosexuality is not a matter of choice but is a matter of condition, then the Aristotelian logic fails. The premise "*some* homosexuals perform homosexual acts and some do not" provides a person no basis to argue that he is not a homosexual. Abstaining from homosexual acts proves nothing. He may be a homosexual who does not reveal his true sexual orientation by his outward conduct.

Thus, it is possible that some people argue that homosexuality is a matter of moral choice not because science supports this viewpoint but because it is a cornerstone in their own personal denial of a painful inner reality. As long as they can control their outward conduct, they can deny their inner orientation.

Whether this is true in any particular case is a conclusion that must be reached separately for each individual.

Richard MacNaughton
Beverly Hills, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Marjorie Rosenberg bases her attack on gay identity on the idea of choice. She will not accept the notion that, for many homosexuals, sexual orientation is either innate or so deeply ingrained in their personality as to be immutable. Thus, for her, any homosexual demand for social protection (or even recognition) is unreasonable. What Mrs. Rosenberg fails to see is that even if homosexuality were "chosen," that would not serve to make it any more "invented" than the concept of religious affiliation. Couldn't Spanish Jews have chosen to abandon their faith to escape the Inquisition? Couldn't the Huguenots of France have done the same? What makes homosexuality any less valid as the basis for a social identity, except Mrs. Rosenberg's prejudice against it? Indeed, Mrs. Rosenberg destroys her own dispassionate façade when she states, "lesbians have impinged far less on the general society than have homosexual men. . . ." Obviously, gay men are objectionable to her because they *impinge on society,* unlike their better-behaved lesbian sisters.

Because Mrs. Rosenberg fails to defend her stance that identity cannot be based on sexual orientation, she imposes on her readers her own moral objection to the fact that gay men constitute a vibrant, visible community. Ironically, the Nazis found Jews and homosexuals equally illegitimate as members of society. Would Mrs. Rosenberg have her readers forget those who perished in concentration camps wearing pink triangles because they were somehow less guiltless than those who wore yellow Stars of David?

Try as she might to deny the existence of the homosexual as a social type, Mrs. Rosenberg cannot help singling out "homosexuals" as the villains attempting to smash tradition and moral order. Who *are* these homosexuals if they are not members of a bona-fide social-minority group? And when the Justice Department reports a rise in "hate crimes" against blacks, Jews, and homosexuals, would Mrs. Rosenberg deny that young punks who go "queer-bashing" are, in fact, victimizing social minorities? True, homosexuality as a distinguishing character trait is a relatively modern Western phenomenon, but this does not render it less tenable than any other social construct such as Hispanic, fundamentalist, or Jew. In the Soviet Union, anti-Semitic propaganda takes much the same tack as the one Mrs. Rosenberg uses against gay men. The Soviets claim that Jewish nationalism is an invention of racist Western Zionists trying to subvert the socialist system. Mrs. Rosenberg's argument that the gay-rights movement is the creation of hedonistic radicals attempting to overturn the established precepts of the psychiatric profession and of Western culture has a frighteningly similar ring.

The fortunate, unalterable historical fact is that gay men and lesbians, despite the differences among them, identify with one another as members of the same oppressed social group. They have published books, legal briefs, record albums, and films that will serve to preserve and protect their heritage from those such as Marjorie Rosenberg who would disparage and deny them. . . .

Rudolf Gaudio
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

"Inventing the Homosexual" might more appropriately have been titled "Justifying the Homophobe." Marjorie Rosenberg is identified only as a psychotherapist in private practice. The nature of her assessment of the various studies on homosexuality, however, leaves those trained in scientific method uncertain as to whether she feels bound by the principles of this method. Certainly research in the field of the behavioral and social sciences, as in many others, is often sloppy, advocatory, and even fabricated. Critiques, however, have a special obligation to scholarly responsibility.

For example, as part of her review of the history of this controversy, she treats the issue of homosexuality as if it were simply a matter of moral choice or free will on the part of its practitioners. And she deplores the "democratic" vote by the members of the American Psychiatric Association to depathologize homosexuality, in its revision of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders,* which she sees as the result of political pressures subverting the process of making responsible judgments. It is true that there is much to criticize in the methods of deciding what is a diagnosable condition, and this applies to many other psychiatrically recognized entities as well. But the fact is that neither the "free-will" theory nor the earlier classification of homosexuality-as-pathology enjoyed the scientific justification which she

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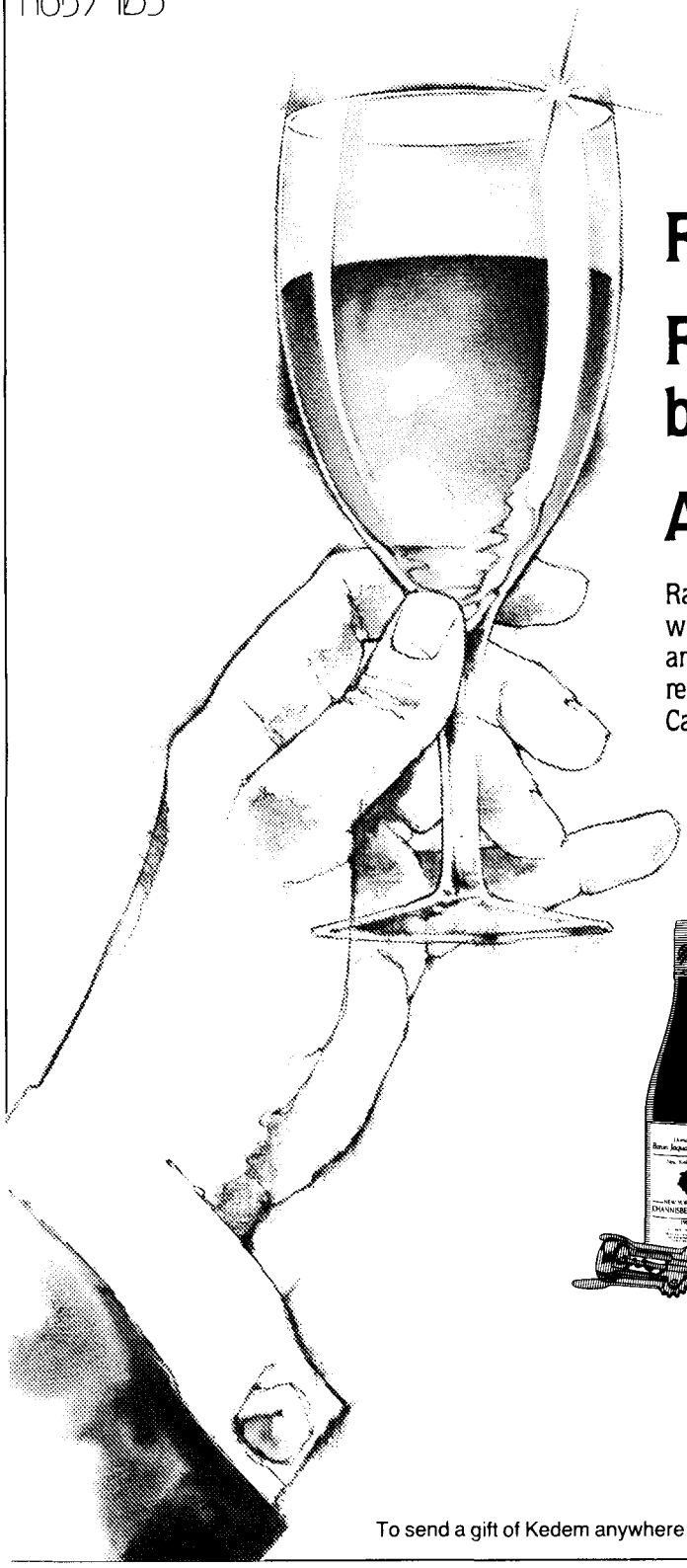

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appears to imply they had previously been accorded.

Mrs. Rosenberg then seeks to dismantle the research—both its methodology and its findings, to which she obviously objects—that seriously questioned both stereotypical thinking among laymen and *a priori* diagnostic categories within the profession. This she does by attacking Evelyn Hooker's pioneering work, *in toto*, and invoking . . . the Kinsey studies on an as-needed basis. Contrary to Mrs. Rosenberg's misreading of aim and process, Hooker's research was enthusiastically supported by her colleagues at UCLA and elsewhere, none of whom, to my knowledge, had either homosexual/anti-homosexual proclivities or sociopolitical agendas. That this might be equally true of Mrs. Rosenberg has yet to be established. The author criticizes Hooker for removing subjects with known psychopathology from her homosexual group; but she followed precisely the same procedure with her heterosexual sample, and any other course would have tainted her study.

In addition, Mrs. Rosenberg incorrectly characterizes the psychodiagnostic tools employed by Hooker as "unreliable," a judgment at widest variance with that of most practitioners in the field. She further faults Hooker for having had the support of certain homosexual groups, from many of which she was able to obtain subjects not readily available elsewhere; perhaps, in retrospect, Mrs. Rosenberg would have liked Hooker to obtain "representative samples" from other sources, which would have been equally criticizable. Mrs. Rosenberg fails to mention that Hooker had similar backing from heterosexual groups. Science has never deemed it valid to dilute objective findings merely because support was forthcoming from groups or individuals objected to by critics who might be displeased by either the efforts or the results of experimental investigations. . . .

She also cites Abram Kardiner's protest against what she calls a "narrow victory" (58 percent) on the homosexuality-as-pathology issue; political and social observers would hardly designate this kind of majority as "narrow." Perhaps as an advocate rather than an objective reporter or investigator with evidence of her own, Mrs. Rosenberg may be excused for failing to cite other approving "authorities" (e.g., Marmor, Morin) or additional supporting studies. Certainly in support of her own contentions she ought to have adduced more evidentiary data. . . .

In the end, the author appears eager to perceive all homosexuals (or scientists whom she feels to be their ill-advised or sinisterly motivated advocates) as "hav[ing] propagandized their way" into social acceptance. In this she seems to contradict her assertion that homosexuals ought not to be accorded a separate status, which sounds ominously like a return to the time when the condition was one that "dared not speak its name." . . .

Whether . . . Mrs. Rosenberg's strangely reasoned attack on rigorous research [is] . . . pseudo-persuasive rhetoric rather than sound psychotherapeutic theory or practice will have to be left to the reader to decide. . . .

LEONARD B. OLINGER, Ph.D.
Psychological Center of
Beverly Hills
Beverly Hills, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I am a gay man. I am not promiscuous, a disseminator of the AIDS virus, a coprophiliac, or interested in "fist-fucking." I think historically homosexuality has been a part of every culture, whether ignored, repressed, or given expression. Sexuality is not an either/or phenomenon; there is a range from homosexuality to bisexuality to heterosexuality. And men and women have varying responses to their exploration of their sexuality, as Mrs. Rosenberg herself notes in pointing out the difference between male homosexuals and lesbians in terms of their visibility in the popular culture.

As a gay man I have experienced much less psychological stress and trauma regarding my own sexuality than I have encountered in the oppression and hostility toward my sexuality I have felt in the culture and from people like Marjorie Rosenberg. I would like to hear her response to how I have "impinged . . . on general society" and how "the family becomes the ultimate victim" in my preference for a sexual partner. If by this she means the (usual) absence of children in gay relationships, are heterosexuals who do not have children as "threatening"? And what about the fact that many gays and lesbians want to, and are, raising children? And also that typically in the adoptive process gays and lesbians are discriminated against as possible parents? . . .

JOSEPH SALACK
Logan, Utah

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Marjorie Rosenberg informs us that the last thirty years have seen the creation of "a male homosexual culture equaled in its openness and visibility only by that of classical Greece." Democratic government too has existed only in the past 200 years and in ancient Greece; nevertheless, I assume that Mrs. Rosenberg is not opposed to democracy.

The invention of the homosexual, to use Mrs. Rosenberg's terminology, absolves "its object from the possibility of choice," whereas previously "one had been free to choose, and, if one were male, to choose on each occasion, how to conduct one's sexual life." Not quite. What this "invention" does is to recognize that behavior may be a question of choice, but sexual desire is not. Homosexual men do not engage in homosexual behavior simply to annoy Mrs. Rosenberg; they do so (in the face of death from AIDS) for some of the same reasons that others engage in heterosexual behavior: to express their love, to be at peace with their souls, and to rejoice in the splendor of the creation.

Mrs. Rosenberg is certainly correct that 19th-century psychiatry and 20th-century activism have led to increasing acceptance of homosexuality. This is no reason to despair; rather, it is evidence of the expansion of democracy and the vitality of our political institutions.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Marjorie Rosenberg draws a distinction between lesbians and homosexual men regarding the separation of sex and affection, attributing distinctive "communal intellectual and artistic activity" to lesbians. This is far from the truth. There is a sizable percentage of homosexual men (much larger than the 10 percent of "happy homosexuals" referred to in the 1978 Kinsey Institute report) who maintain committed, monogamous, enduring love relationships and are involved extensively in the arts and intellectual pursuits.

I recommend that Mrs. Rosenberg take a closer look at the real

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gay community. There is considerably more to it than one learns from biased media or the equally biased and/or inadequate sources (both gay and straight) that she cites in her article. I doubt if any scientifically sound analysis of the real scene could be successfully conducted within today's homophobic society: the majority of gay men and women remain closeted for obvious reasons.

ROBERT LAGERSTROM
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . On its own, Michael A. Fumento's superb "AIDS: Are Heterosexuals at Risk?" [November 1987] stands as a healthy antidote to much of the hysterical heterosexual reaction to the AIDS crisis, and restores badly needed perspective, depoliticizing and de-emotionalizing a tragic issue about which clear-sighted analysis is desperately required. . . .

But to follow this with Marjorie Rosenberg's "Inventing the Homosexual," which appears superficially to be an *ad hominem* broadside on homosexuality, smacks of a kind of social McCarthyism that is inconsistent with the liberal spirit that COMMENTARY . . . has always represented.

FREDERIC WILE
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With regard to Marjorie Rosenberg's intriguing article: it is a curious fact that in the ideology of the modern Left, nearly every aspect of gender identity, sex roles, and sexual desire is said to be a product of "culture." Homosexuality, and only homosexuality, is held to be biologically determined.

NICHOLAS DAVIDSON
New York City

MARJORIE ROSENBERG writes:

My inquiry into the elevation of homosexual behavior and homosexual proclivity to the status of a total social identity—a process which began about a century ago—requires the resurrection of distinctions which the process itself has all but obliterated. Stephen M. Rittenberg and Herbert M. Wyman are utterly uncomprehending of these distinctions and thus confuse the historic presence of subcultures where homosexual activity was allowed or encouraged with the relatively recent adoption of homosexual preference as a basis for identity. It might be interjected here that only an economic system which trivializes work and provides unprecedented leisure could support such an identity for large numbers of people.

Despite their failure to distinguish between act and self-definition, Drs. Rittenberg and Wyman do perceive, with aggrieved hypersensitivity, my barely hinted view that psychoanalytic theory has contributed significantly, although certainly not purposively, to the development of a conception of homosexual identity and to the present public homosexual culture. Freud's insistence on the inherent bisexuality of all humans, a theory based on confused borrowings from the faulty biology of his time, and his conceptions of repression and denial have provided intellectual encouragement and justification for recourse to homosexual behavior.

John H. Roe's letter provides a typical unacknowledged instance of the validation of homosexuality by reference to Freud's mistaken notion of bisexuality, while Richard MacNaughton's simplistic explanation of denial is yet another illustration of the muddling effect of Freudian theory. Mr. MacNaughton announces that many who control their own conduct are denying an "inner orientation" and thus, he points out, those of us who do not practice homosexuality are all suspect of wanting to. Equally, by this reasoning, those of us who do not engage in incest or have not become drug addicts, child molesters, or murderers, could be harboring comparably insistent "inner orientations." Absurd as is this refusal to be satisfied with the distinction between act and conjectured unconscious motive, Freud's deep pessimism about human nature blurred the distinction, and contemporary thought—firmly grounded in the idea of the original sin of the unconscious—has further negated realistic discrimination. But the contribution of Freudian thought to the culture of homosexuality is, of course, a subject for an essay in itself.

Rudolf Gaudio's question: what makes homosexuality any less valid as a basis for social identity than religious faith couldn't be easier to answer but inspires depression that it is asked. Religion involves thinking about the nature of the universe, the meaning of life and death, and the possibility of eternity—issues of infinitely greater significance than the acting out of sexual preference, Mr. Gaudio.

Leonard B. Olinger, a psychologist, unsurprisingly defends psychologist Evelyn Hooker, as Drs. Rittenberg and Wyman defend psychoanalytic doctrine. I know that Hooker's research was enthusiastically supported: it was, in fact, politically demanded, and not just by homosexuals but by the spirit of the time. The trouble with Hooker's research, apart from the considerations I mentioned in my article, is that it is impenetrably tautological. Beginning with the assumption that homosexuality itself is not a problem and eliminating from her study homosexuals with other obvious personality disturbances, Hooker went on to compare her sample with heterosexuals who were likewise free of grossly discernible difficulties. Presto! Homosexuals and heterosexuals are declared to show no significant differences of adjustment.

I should note that Mr. Olinger, in his long critical letter, several times puts quotation marks around words or phrases, giving the impression that he is quoting me—which he is not, in any instance, doing. Further, it is hard to take seriously, as an attempt at intellectual clarification, a letter which begins with the hurling of the propagandistic epithet, "homophobe."

Joseph Salack invites commendation for his personal adjustment, as though I had not consistently stressed the great range of homosexual behavior as a major objection to the contemporary sinking of all such differences in the cause of homosexual activism.

To George Jochnowitz I would say that the increasing acceptance of homosexual behavior owes much more to our economic system than to our political institutions—high individual consumption being a goal which no longer requires the family for its realization. The earlier stages of capitalism, dependent on the productive capacity of the family unit and lacking a superfluity of material goods, could not tolerate a widespread homosexual culture.

To return to Mr. Roe: his reference to a twenty-year-old article as proof that a homosexual identity is actually discouraged by homosexual "labeling" discounts the fact that these last twenty years have given overwhelming evidence that the author of the article was wrong. Not only has the number of young

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males who seek the categorization vastly increased (ask any woman in her twenties or thirties about the frequency of her encounters with male homosexuality and compare her experiences with her mother's at the same age), but far from providing thresholds of permissible behavior, such categorization has encouraged the rejection of all societal restraints on sex, as the promiscuity which fostered the transmission of AIDS testifies.

The above letters are, I think, notable for their attribution of psychological and political motivation as a substitute for reasoned argument, and for their tone of personal anger. Nicholas Davidson's is the single exception, and he raises perhaps the most important question of all in calling to our attention the increasing tendency in the last few years to assert that homosexuality is biologically determined. Against all evidence to the contrary, this claim is presented as a way of further removing those who engage in homosexuality from responsibility for their choice.

American Foreign Policy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am not sure that "feminization" is the most felicitous term to apply to what James Nuechterlein ["The Feminization of the American Left," November 1987] says has happened to the political Left—sentimentalization might perhaps be closer—but he does present a meaningful analysis, and does it admirably. As he developed his thesis, however, I could not help thinking that the vastly increased influence of sentimentality on political policy-making is a phenomenon not really characteristic of the Left alone. . . . Nowhere is this more evident than in the field of international affairs.

Here, Mr. Nuechterlein writes, "The feminine reluctance concerning the use of power—which is today the single most distinctive characteristic of left-wing doctrine in foreign policy—hobbles the pursuit of justice and stable order in world politics. The instinctive hesitation of the Left to employ force or the threat of force in foreign affairs goes well beyond the prudential caution that a nuclear age requires. . . ." But in the minds of many, perhaps most, Americans, the use of power abroad has for some time been considered both dangerous and immoral. Paying with, or even risking, the lives of our men to achieve a national purpose has not been considered a viable option. Hence our national paralysis when our embassy in Iran was ravaged and our citizens held hostage, lest their lives be put at risk. Hence our later supply of weapons to Iran, in the hope that a few Americans held hostage in Lebanon might be released, and this concession by a supposedly "macho" President! Hence the widespread opposition to Reagan's policy in Nicaragua, lest it culminate in the direct involvement of our own military and the loss of American lives. Hence many other renunciations of the use of economic and/or military power, or the threat of them, since the Vietnam war, in situations where a realistic assessment of our national interests and future security clearly warranted them. To repeat, this "feminine" attitude is not confined to the political Left. It has become, to our serious cost, a generalized American phenomenon, cutting across the political Left, Right, and Center.

Why, one may wonder, do we maintain armed forces some two million strong, and spend some $300 billion to equip and field them, if we fear to put lives at risk, many or few, where the vital interests of our nation are at stake? Are the members of the armed forces, and their families, not aware that they are engaged in a hazardous occupation? Are not the rest of us aware that the prime purpose of our armed forces is to safeguard not only our own soil but our vital interests and fellow Americans throughout the world, whether in the Persian Gulf, Western Europe, or elsewhere? Must we not all stand ready to risk lives, as well as treasure, to defend our ideals, our values, our future security, our honor? Can we permit a sentimental concept of the sanctity of life at all costs to outweigh ignominy, shame, dishonor, terror, subservience, or slavery? . . .

LOUIS J. WALINSKY
Washington, D.C.

Ludwig Lewisohn

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The New York (Jewish) Intellectuals" [November 1987], Ruth R. Wisse properly disposes of Alfred Kazin's putdown of the "dreary middle-class chauvinism he encountered in Zionist clubs" for the jealous and empty statement it was. Yes, middle-class American Zionists were and are provincials—but they have some accomplishments. It is they whose crucial efforts restored the state of Israel and they who support it till this day. As Mrs. Wisse notes, those others did nothing and felt nothing for the crimes against the Jewish people—not even in 1944! But then, how could they be expected to? It was easier to adopt the mindless pose of enraged internationalism they still pursue.

Ludwig Lewisohn was a far better writer and scholar and critic than Mrs. Wisse allows. It took courage in his day to publish *The Island Within* and the other works that followed. That novel sold sensationally well but cost him his position in the world of letters as he foresaw. Yet any comparison of the few Zionist writers like Lewisohn with the *Partisan Review* multitude is misleading. The Zionists lived in the small Jewish world, the others in the vastnesses of world Marxism. But what have they to show for it but empty nostalgia for a dead movement without believers? The Zionists have a state reborn, a language revived, and a people saved.

Which movement is in the dustbin of history?

ELEAZAR LIPSKY
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I cannot help admiring Ruth R. Wisse's knowledge of the New York scene conveyed with great skill in her article. Her critical view tends to confirm what has been suspected for some time, especially since the definitive Holocaust research done by . . . David Wyman charging that not only Christians but Jews were at fault for allowing the unparalleled misfortune to happen to the European Jews when hundreds of thousands could have been saved perhaps as late as 1944. . . .

I share Mrs. Wisse's outrage at this callous disregard and insensitivity [which] . . . illustrate what the German Jewish novelist Jakob Wassermann has called *Trägheit des Herzens* ("sluggishness of the heart"), a condition which affected many people including artists and intellectuals. . . . It is the leitmotif of many of Wassermann's books such as *The World's Illusion*, *The Goose Man*, and *Wedlock*. These books, incidentally, were

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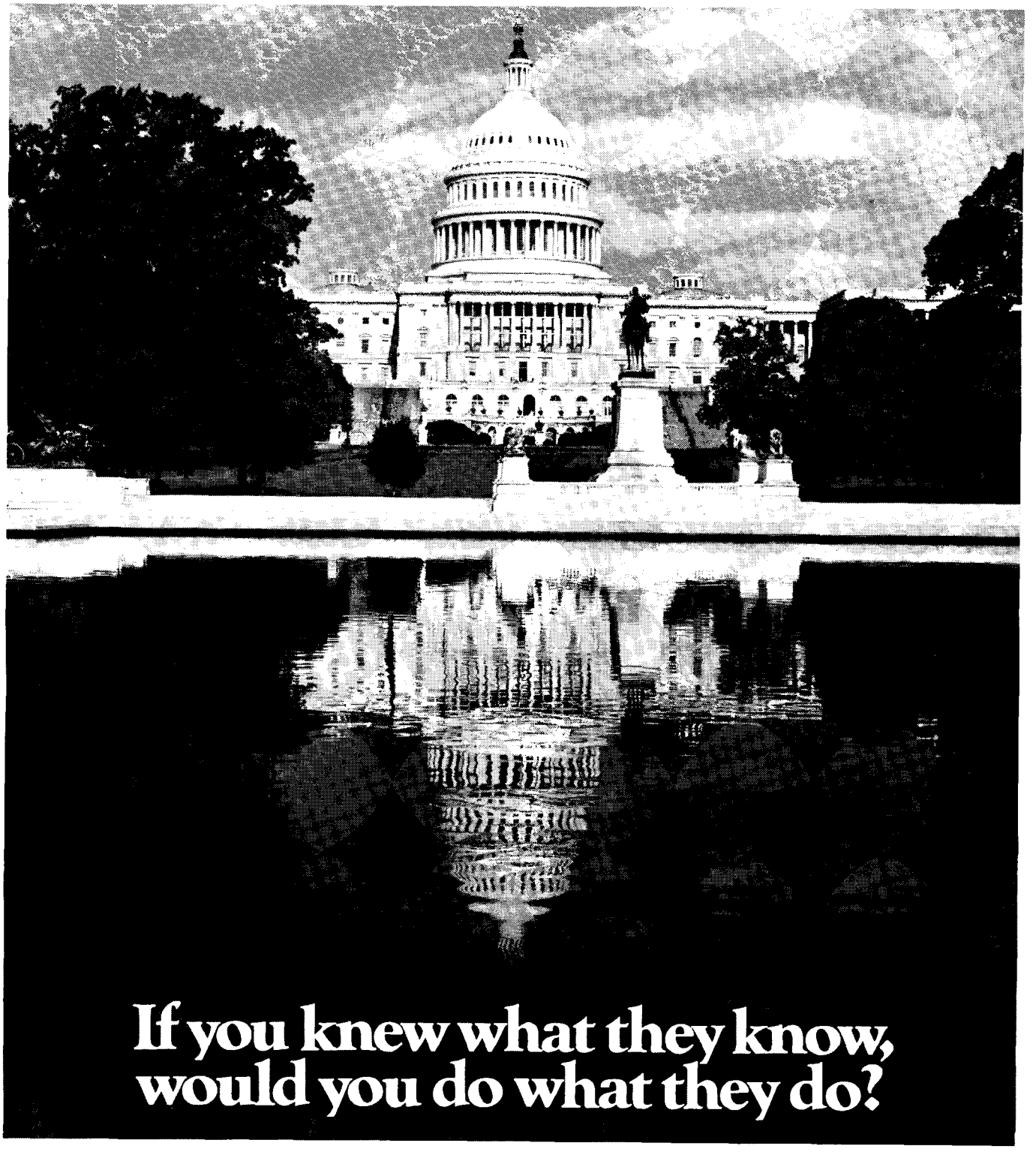

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masterfully translated into English by none other than Ludwig Lewisohn. . . .

Permit me to say a word here in vindication of that thoroughgoing individualist, literary critic, and early Zionist, Ludwig Lewisohn. . . . His position as a human being and as an inspiring teacher/scholar cries out for understanding. . . .

As to Lewisohn's literary stature as an American author, I wish to draw Mrs. Wisse's attention to an article by Henry Mentor in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* as well as to another article in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* and to Charles J. Glicksberg's fine critique in *American Literary Criticism*. In Glicksberg's considered judgment, Ludwig Lewisohn was "a scholar, a creative critic, a scrupulous craftsman whose work is informed with high seriousness and moral passion" as well as "a passionate Jew." There is also Seymour Lainoff's study, *Ludwig Lewisohn* (1982). Lainoff says of Lewisohn . . . that he "will be remembered . . . for [his] distinguished contribution to American literature."

HENRY REGENSTEINER
New York City

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

The altogether welcome support of Eleazar Lipsky and Henry Regensteiner somewhat distorts my article, which acknowledged the important contributions of the New York Jewish intellectuals to American literature and politics, and *in the light of those achievements* expressed dismay at their failure to consecrate the same intense intelligence to the Jews. I share my correspondents' interest in Ludwig Lewisohn, whose embattled plea for political assistance to the Jews (e.g., in the pages of the *Nation* in 1933) remains eloquent proof of his "moral passion." Yet the quality of his ideas did not make him a better writer. I believe the artistic problem begins with his inability to find a natural literary voice, a comfortable level of language—a failure by no means unique to him. In any case, the critical reassessment Lewisohn deserves should try to uphold the honest standards that he himself set.

Bilingualism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Peter Brimelow's mean-minded and inaccurate article, "A Cautionary Case of Bilingualism" [November 1987], warrants a reply. It would take too much space to expose all of Mr. Brimelow's distortions and inaccuracies, but allow me to point to a few of the serious ones.

"All unilinguals are seriously disadvantaged in modern Canada," says Mr. Brimelow. This disadvantaged state would come as a surprise to the 85 percent of Canadians who, according to Mr. Brimelow's own figures, are unilingual in either French or English. (Mr. Brimelow would seem to imply that the average Canadian's highest ambition is to be a senior civil servant. Fortunately for Canada, this is not so.) Unilinguals are not seriously disadvantaged: 98-99 percent of jobs in Canada are open to unilinguals, and, even then, unilinguals can learn a second language, something that seems to have eluded Mr. Brimelow. This is not to say that speaking more than one language is not advantageous. I would hope that even Mr. Brimelow understands that education has its advantages.

He goes on to assert that "Only the first, bilingual, class is fully eligible for careers with the largest employer, the federal government." This is simply not true, nor is his assertion that "all important posts require both languages." Less than a third of federal government jobs have any bilingual requirements. As to Mr. Brimelow's fears that Francophones (French speakers) are taking over the civil service, Francophones make up 27.9 percent of all federal government employees; they represent 20 percent of executive positions and 19.7 percent of senior managers. This is roughly equal to Francophone representation in the population.

I am skeptical that Mr. Brimelow could find many examples of "required bilingualism" for "post-office employees in remote English-speaking villages." I have worked in the post office and to this day it remains very much unilingual.

According to Mr. Brimelow, "All the evidence suggests that free peoples just do not readily learn foreign languages on a mass scale." This would surprise the one-and-a-half billion people on the globe who have readily, and freely, learned a second (or third or fourth) language. It would also surprise the tens of thousands of French- and English-immersion pupils in Canada. French immersion, and more recently English immersion, may be Canada's greatest contribution to language education worldwide. Immersion has proved to be a tremendously successful educational experiment, and has been studied and admired by educators from a variety of countries.

Far from having bilingualism foisted on Canadians, as Mr. Brimelow implies, there is a strong grass-roots demand for second-language learning and teaching. According to Gallup, more than two out of three Canadian parents want their children to be bilingual, and they want this as much for the cultural insights and liberal education gained as for the job opportunities bilingualism may afford. And the job opportunities are not only at home, *chez nous*. As American companies experience lost sales because of a lack of polyglot salespeople, Canadian companies are discovering the benefits of having a younger, more bilingual workforce available.

Having a younger generation with much better foreign/second language skills than their parents is but one offshoot of bilingualism in Canada, one which might be described more positively than as "strikingly regressive."

"The average inhabitant of Toronto hears no more French than his counterpart in Toledo or Tampa," says Mr. Brimelow. In addition to several French-language radio and TV stations, in addition to French theaters and schools, Toronto's quarter-million Francophones ensure that one does hear French in Toronto, now more than ever. How many French radio and TV stations and how many French people are there in Toledo anyway?

Perhaps the most noxious of all of Mr. Brimelow's statements is his implication that bilingualism is somehow tantamount to the insidious apartheid legislation in effect in South Africa. His statement that "bilingualism cannot be used to drive [Anglophones] completely out of public life, which was the tendency in white South Africa" is so disgusting that one hopes that someday Mr. Brimelow discovers what truly repressive language laws can do.

It is too bad Mr. Brimelow did not state clearly what sort of a civil service he would like for Canada. Would he like civil servants who meet the public in places like Ottawa and Montreal to be unable to speak to a good portion of the public? Would he like senior public

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servants to be incapable of speaking to their staff? Personally, I like my senior civil servants to be bright and worldly; bilingual people tend to be bright and worldly.

Is he suggesting, beyond his own fears and self-created language bogeyman, that being unilingual is preferable to being bilingual? What would he propose in lieu of official bilingualism? I wonder if Mr. Brimelow has anything to propose: if he wants merely to dispose, perhaps he would save us the hysteria and distortions next time around.

Canada struggles on, inventing and reinventing itself anew. Part of our success in living peaceably and tolerantly is in opening new windows on other people, so that we may come to know and appreciate the diversity of people on this planet. Mr. Brimelow would seem happiest in a small unilingual, unicultural fiefdom. I hope he finds it.

JAMIE MACKINNON
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada

PETER BRIMELOW writes:

In my mean-minded article, I argued that imposing institutional bilingualism in a country like Canada, where only limited numbers of the population can actually speak both languages, has significant consequences in terms of the distribution of power and perquisites; and that these consequences are not publicly discussed in Canada because important interest groups insist that the policy be treated as a sacred cow. In Jamie MacKinnon's letter, readers can inspect this process in action.

Somewhat over half of Canada's Gross National Product is in the hands of governments (provincial and federal) and government-controlled corporations, about 20 percentage points higher than the comparable level in the U.S. Canada's federal civil service is the largest single employer in the country. To argue that it somehow does not matter whether bilingualism is required for the top posts in this pervasive presence—and for fully a third of its total workforce, stealthily increased from the 10 percent that was originally proposed—can only be described, if I may coin a phrase, as *pas sérieux*.

Bilingualism advocates like Mr. MacKinnon frequently rhapsodize about the supposed advantages of learning other languages, but this is completely irrelevant to the issue of institutional bilingualism—the policy of running the government in two languages. Institutional bilingualism entails practical consequences which I discussed, and which Mr. MacKinnon, typically, evades.

I should add, however, that the phenomenon of French-immersion schooling, although certainly popular with some ambitious upper-middle-class parents in Canada, is nugatory in its overall impact, involving perhaps 5 percent of eligible children. Census figures confirm that the vast majority of English Canadians, some 14 out of 15, remain stolidly unilingual. Those government-sponsored French-language broadcasts are going out into thin air.

This is particularly the case because, as I pointed out and Mr. MacKinnon ignored, the same census figures show that Canada's two language groups are steadily separating themselves geographically. Thus, in the whole of Ontario, which includes the federal capital of Ottawa and the French settlement belts in the east and north, only 332,940 French speakers out of a population of 8,524,265 were recorded by the census-takers in 1981—an absolute decline from the 352,465 of ten years earlier. Mr. MacKinnon's fantasy of a quarter-million French speakers in the commercial metropolis of Toronto is typical, again, of the demographic delusions that Canada's bilingualism boosters like to propagate. As a long-time resident of Toronto, I can testify that you will hear the same amount of French spoken in the streets there as in Toledo: none.

At least most people will. Mr. MacKinnon is clearly capable of hearing what he wishes. Thus he imputes to me views on French participation in the civil service which I nowhere expressed, and accuses me of comparing Canada's language policy to apartheid, rather than to the enactment in South Africa of Afrikaans-English institutional bilingualism, a particularly interesting parallel because it was consciously aimed at weakening the political power of South African English speakers. However, Mr. MacKinnon is no doubt sincere in his desire to subject me to repressive legislation.

What would I propose in Canada? As I implied in my article and argue at length in my book, *The Patriot Game* (Hoover Institution Press), I think Quebec and English Canada should divorce. Good fences make good neighbors. This would be best for the *Québecois*, the Canadians, and, not least, for the Americans. The new class of bilingual mediators in Ottawa, however, would then have to find honest, noncoercive work.

Pagans, Christians, Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to commend Chaim Raphael for his sensitive, insightful article, "Pagans, Christians, Jews" [October 1987]. As a Catholic, I found his schoolboy concern over possible Christian identification with "pagan Greeks" in the story of the Maccabees particularly poignant.

Mr. Raphael may be interested to know that the Catholic Church until recent times (1960) officially memorialized "The Holy Maccabees, Martyrs" in its Church calendar on August 1 as among the "Saints of the Old Testament." And since Catholics hold the two Books of the Maccabees as part of our canon of the Hebrew Scriptures (on pre-talmudic Jewish precedent), we continue to identify with and to revere Eleazar, his brothers, and his mother, as true witnesses to faith in the One God.

EUGENE J. FISHER
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A certain rabbi of note once wrote, in Greek, to friends in the Greek city of Corinth: "The Greeks are searching for wisdom. . . . But . . . the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God." This rabbi never quoted the great Greek philosophers or expounded, in his teaching, on Greek theology. He did, however, make extensive use of the Torah, Neviim, and Ketubim.

This rabbi is better known as the Apostle Paul. His writings in the first three chapters of the book called First Corinthians detail his low opinion of Greek philosophy and religion. True, all kinds of paganism were adopted by Christendom, especially after 100 C.E., but the fault is not Paul's. He writes of "the mystery of God" (or, divine mystery) and of "the profound secrets of God." His sources, however, are Job, Isaiah, Zechariah, and Jeremiah. . . .

It may be that the Christian faith

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of some owes more to the Greeks than to the Jews, more to Plato than to Jesus or Paul. Nevertheless, it was the "Apostle to the Gentiles" who pointed in the opposite direction, to the Torah, in 1 Corinthians 1:31 (quoting from Jeremiah 9:24): "The one boasting about his wisdom, let him boast in his knowledge of the Lord."

SOLOMON M. LANDERS
Clinton, Maryland

CHAIM RAPHAEL writes:

I am gratified that my reflections on the Jewish rejection of paganism evoked such a warm echo from Eugene J. Fisher. It is all the more remarkable that the Maccabee story should establish a bond of sympathy where we might have seemed beset by differences, particularly over the absence of the Books of the Maccabees from the Jewish Bible. In due course, the deeds of the Maccabees in martial terms came through to bolster Jewish pride; yet, as Mr. Fisher suggests, the really strong links are those of our shared reactions at the human level in admiring the courage of the ancient priest Eleazar and in the overwhelming pity of the story of Hannah and her seven sons.

Turning to Solomon M. Landers's letter, there is much to consider in his judgment that St. Paul drew more from Jewish tradition than from the surrounding Greek world; but this is in any case only part of the story. One has to make up one's mind on whether his dominant aim was to base himself on Jewish teachings for their own sake, or for their proof, as he saw it, that the Jewish Bible pointed ineluctably to the emergence of a more than human figure whose death was central to man's redemption from sin. There are many grades of view on this.

Lincoln & Emancipation

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

George Szamuely ["The Imperial Congress," September 1987] states that Lincoln ". . . freed the slaves without bothering to consult anyone."

What a twistory of history! Between April 1861 when the Civil War began and September 1862 when Lincoln announced to his cabinet his decision under commander-in-chief authority to proclaim emancipation in still-unsuppressed areas of the Confederacy, consultation between the White House and leading members of Congress, other areas of officialdom, journalists, and the public had been frequent and significant. In two major very public instances Lincoln stayed the hands of Union generals (Hunter and Fremont) who resorted to emancipation in particularly vulnerable local areas under their command. Congress had debated and enacted not one but two Confiscation Acts, in 1861 and 1862, which dealt in part with freedom for the slaves of persons whose disloyalty to the United States had been proved after prosecution.

All of which is to say that this not insignificant point of Mr. Szamuely's article is insupportable. I refer him, not immodestly I trust, to my book, *A More Perfect Union: The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on the Constitution* (Knopf, 1973), especially chapters 9-12.

Moreover, the general thesis in Mr. Szamuely's article, of congressional imperialism concerning foreign policy, especially with respect to war and emergency powers, seems to me to be very difficult to square with a great mass of evidence that leads me at least to differing conclusions. Again, I refer to an effort of my own on this matter: *Quiet Past and Stormy Present?: War Powers in American History* (American Historical Association, 1986).

HAROLD M. HYMAN
Rice University
Houston, Texas

GEORGE SZAMUELY writes:

Harold M. Hyman's choice of terrain upon which to defend the constitutional prerogatives of the "imperial Congress" is somewhat surprising. As he well knows, from the moment Lincoln entered office he sought to free the slaves, but he was concerned that it be done in accordance with the Constitution. Obviously Congress lacked the constitutional authority to pass legislation outlawing slavery since it would thereby have been usurping the rights of individual states. A constitutional amendment was also out of the question since the existence of fifteen slave-owning states ensured that there was no way that the legislatures of at least three-quarters of all the states would give their approval to such a measure. The remaining possibility was executive action. The two Confiscation Acts that Mr. Hyman refers to were narrow in scope and were promulgated to facilitate the Union war effort. (They did not apply to slaves belonging to loyal owners or to those who had been disloyal before mid-1862.)

The point is that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was not undertaken in order to eradicate a great evil—which he was certainly not constitutionally empowered to do—or in order to improve the North's military prospects (which could have been left in the hands of Congress), but in order to preserve the Union. As Lincoln had famously put it just a few weeks earlier: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it. . . . What I do about slavery . . . I do because I believe it helps to save the Union." In other words, it is not Congress but the President, through his powers as commander-in-chief of the army, who acts as the constitutional representative of the nation as a whole.

As for the question of consultation, Mr. Hyman surely knows that it was not merely Congress but the press and the public at large who were also caught by surprise by Lincoln's dramatic announcement freeing the slaves.

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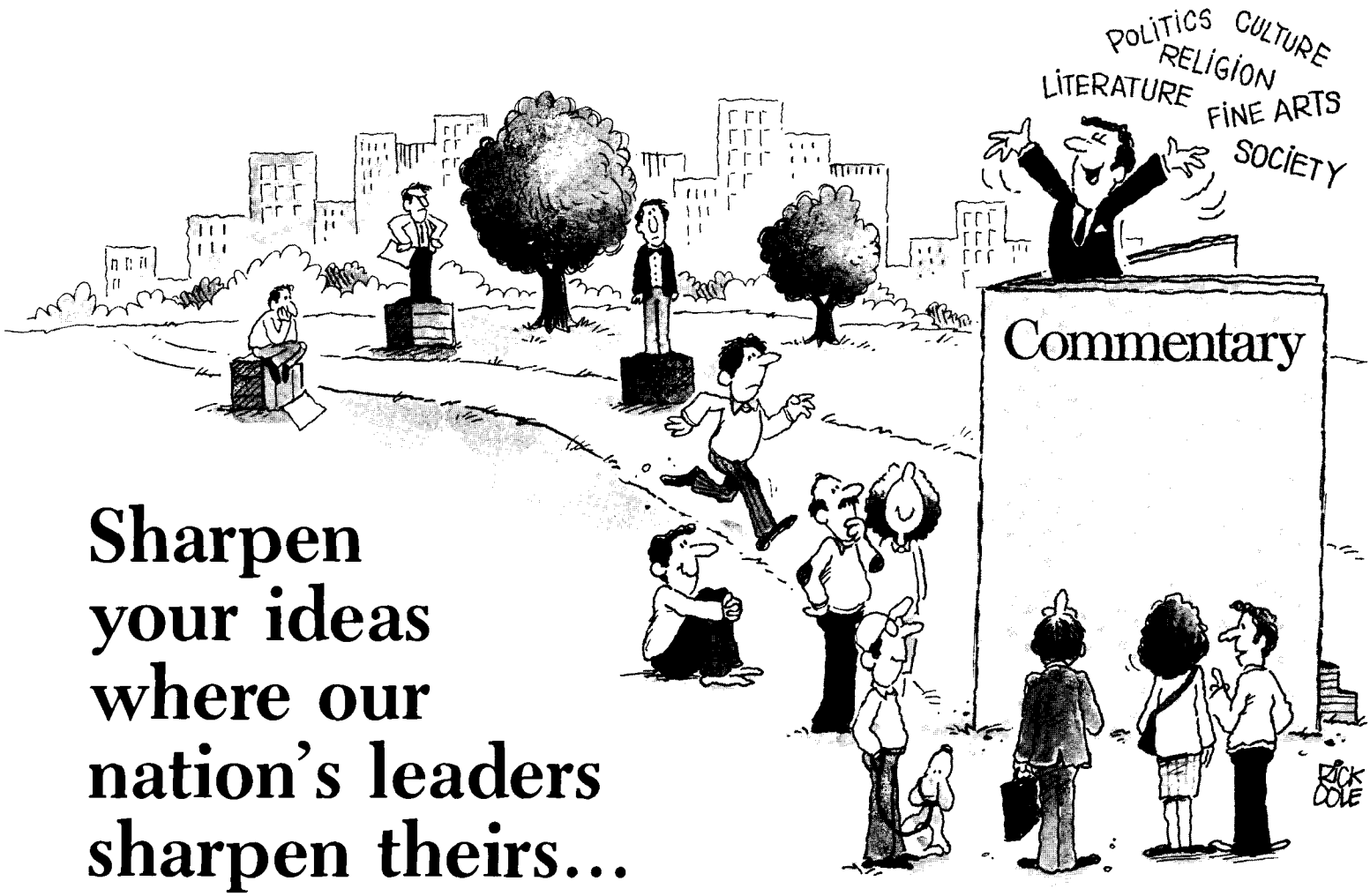

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Reagan's Rush to Disarm

Patrick Glynn

WHETHER to his most passionate traditional supporters or to his bitterest long-time critics, President Reagan's unreserved embrace of arms control in the final months of his administration has come as a considerable surprise. Hardly five years ago extreme critics of the President were prepared to accuse him of wishing to fight a nuclear war. Now it is clear that a host of assumptions held by both his critics and his supporters were fundamentally mistaken. Indeed, since the Reykjavik summit of October 1986, this avowedly most conservative of recent American Presidents has emerged as a champion of nuclear-disarmament measures far more radical and sweeping than even many arms-control proponents deem advisable. Moreover, hand in hand with his public shift on arms control has come a startling reversal of his personal views on the Soviet Union. During the December Washington summit, he affirmed his new opinion that the members of the Soviet leadership "no longer feel," as he put it, an "obligation" to achieve "a one-world Communist state."

Whatever the complex personal reasons for this shift in outlook, the implications of the transformation extend far beyond the Republican party or the President himself. In a matter of a few months, the change in President Reagan's public posture has altered the whole configuration of the Western arms-control debate. Long-held positions have been reversed. Many commentators who once pressed the Reagan administration for progress in arms control now anxiously urge caution. Others who have gained public reputations as opponents of the arms-control process have become conspicuous defenders of treaties, current and prospective, embodying the most radical arms cuts. In the process, the ever precarious balance between realistic interests and idealistic impulses that determines the direction of American foreign policy has been seriously upset. On issues vitally affecting the future of the nation, a new and strange paralysis has set in.

PATRICK GLYNN, special assistant to the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency from 1986 to 1987, is currently senior fellow at the James Madison Foundation, where he is completing a book entitled *Closing Pandora's Box: A Critical History of Arms Control*, to be published by New Republic Books/Basic Books.

At the root of our present predicament lie three unforeseen developments: first, the apparent transformation of President Reagan from the chief spokesman for realism in defense issues into a quixotic advocate of total nuclear disarmament; second, the emergence of a new Soviet leader capable of making daring and unexpected tactical concessions in the service of broader Soviet global strategic aims; and finally, the surprising transmutation of U.S. proposals for "deep reductions" in nuclear weapons from a widely discounted propaganda initiative into an imminent strategic reality.

This last circumstance has proved especially troublesome for those in the United States who traditionally urge realism in defense matters. Two groups in particular have been adversely affected. First, and most seriously hampered, have been the defense conservatives currently or formerly affiliated with the Reagan administration itself. Most of these foreign-policy realists initially advocated radical arms reductions largely as a way of discrediting previous arms treaties and slowing down the arms-negotiating process. The foundation of their strategy was the expectation that the Soviets would resist real arms cuts. Now that this expectation has been invalidated and the Soviets have embraced the American-sponsored program of radical disarmament, such conservatives find themselves in an awkward situation, forced to choose between preserving their personal credibility, on the one hand, and stating, on the other, what they doubtless know to be the case—namely, that radical arms cuts, whether in theater or strategic nuclear weapons, will not help and could severely damage Western security and stability. Most such figures appear to have opted thus far to save face. In this way, some of the most effective opponents of rash and ill-advised arms-control measures have been all but silenced.

The second and larger group consists of a variety of sober analysts and former officials affiliated with past Republican and Democratic administrations. In contrast to the Reagan group, these commentators long ago made their political peace with the arms-control process. Never openly critical of arms control in principle, such officials have nonetheless striven to ensure by their advice and commentary that arms-control measures do not adversely affect the U.S. force structure or close off

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critical future options for U.S. defense policy, at least in the realm of offensive nuclear arms. In line with this approach, such analysts have sought refuge in the "moderate" offensive arms control of the SALT era—in marginal limits that do not really inhibit either side in any fundamental way. However, now that arms control has become equated under Reagan with radical arms cuts, such commentators find themselves in a quandary. On the one hand, these analysts are perfectly capable of recognizing the potentially quite grave strategic problems posed by current and contemplated arms treaties. On the other hand, to pinpoint and show the way out of these problems would be to violate the political taboo against criticizing the arms-control process itself.

All this might be dismissed as an academic dispute were it not for the fact that in the coming months the United States confronts a series of critical, indeed fateful, choices on arms control. More is at stake than the drawbacks inherent in the intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) treaty, whose ratification now seems, in any case, a foregone conclusion. In the wake of the INF treaty the West will almost certainly be faced with a series of alluring but dangerous Soviet initiatives on chemical, conventional, and short-range nuclear weapons. Not only is the West psychologically ill-prepared to meet this challenge, but in a number of cases (e.g., the unverifiable American proposal for a ban on chemical weapons), U.S. positions themselves would lead to agreements seriously damaging to Western interests.

Most important and urgent, however, is the imminent strategic-arms-reductions (START) accord. By its own report the administration is committed to negotiate such a treaty by the end of President Reagan's term—indeed, if possible, in time for a Moscow summit this summer. The treaty is enormously complex, and there is no guarantee it will be completed. However, even in the absence of a treaty, the President could well choose to commit the country to a "framework" or "in-principle" agreement with the Soviets that could prove almost as binding—and even less verifiable and enforceable—than the START agreement itself. Mere anticipation of a new treaty may cause Congress to slow or cut back key programs. And even now the clear possibility remains that the signing of a finished START agreement could be months or even weeks away.

Aimed at the very core of the U.S. and Soviet arsenals, the prospective START treaty has about it a decisiveness and finality unequaled by that of any previous arms agreement. If signed, it will require us to destroy nearly half of our existing strategic arsenal—large numbers of existing ICBMs, bombers, and ballistic-missile submarines. It will also almost certainly require fundamental revisions in our plans for future weapons—particularly sea-based systems. It will place our arsenal under unprecedentedly close control and supervision by the Soviet Union. At the same time, it will pose entirely novel—and almost certainly insurmountable—problems of verifying compliance on the Soviet side. Because of the radical nature of its provisions, it will raise truly grave risks should the Soviets opt, as they have on past agreements, to cheat. And finally, despite the President's apparent conviction to the contrary, the START treaty will end forever the possibility of deploying effective defenses against Soviet ballistic missiles. The Soviets have made clear that they reserve the right to cease scheduled reductions or even to increase their offensive forces should the United States attempt to proceed with space-testing of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Indeed, the possibility arises that a Soviet threat of cessation of reductions under a START agreement could be employed as a wider tool of political blackmail, affecting a host of decisions about our force structure and our foreign policy.

But what is perhaps most remarkable is that the START agreement will do all this without in any way enhancing strategic stability. That is the paradox, indeed the scandal, at the center of the process. Long advertised by the administration as a method of enhancing stability and "reducing the risk of war," the treaty will in fact do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, the agreement as currently designed promises to deepen our vulnerability by significantly reducing our ability to retaliate against a Soviet preemptive attack.

How is it that we have arrived at such a juncture? How is it that an administration which set itself the historical task of repairing the nation's strategic vulnerability is prepared at the end of seven years to sign an agreement which—as is obvious from the sheer arithmetic of its provisions—will not only deepen our vulnerability but seal it for all time? The answer lies largely in the mischievous nature of the arms-control process itself—a process which, despite our best intentions, has operated time and again over the past two decades to inhibit the United States, psychologically if not legally, from taking common-sense measures on behalf of its own defense while both veiling and facilitating an enormous expansion of Soviet military power vis-à-vis the West.

II

The irony is that all this comes at a time when developments outside the realm of arms control might seem in key respects to favor the West, if only they were permitted to run their natural course. Partly thanks to the restoration of American self-confidence and economic growth, the 1980's have witnessed a resurgence of worldwide faith in the cause of liberal democracy. In recent years, several new democracies have sprouted up around the globe. In many parts of the Third World, Communism today is no longer

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the fashionable cause it once was. Indeed, one of the most important developments of recent times has been the emergence of national-liberation movements *against* Communism. Aided by U.S. arms, these movements have recently dealt unprecedented defeats to totalitarian forces—particularly in Southern Africa and Afghanistan. At a number of points on the periphery of the Soviet empire, the correlation of forces seems to be shifting decisively in favor of the West.

At the same time, Moscow confronts a systemic crisis of historic proportions. So deep has this crisis proved that the Soviet leadership has apparently been led to the extreme exigency of overhauling certain public themes of Communist ideology in an effort to rebuild the shattered morale of a populace dispirited by decades of grinding totalitarian rule.

At the core of the Soviet crisis is the emerging realization—unsettling for the Soviet leadership—that totalitarian repression is proving incompatible with the efficient operations of a modern economy. From the early days of the Soviet regime, the Soviet Communist party has counted on forced economic development, often at great human cost, to create an infrastructure capable of supporting its quest for military power and influence around the globe. In the first stages of development, totalitarianism may have even proved an asset to rapid economic development, particularly in the industrial sector. But as recent years have shown, totalitarian societies are by and large incapable of fostering or even permitting the individual creativity and initiative so vital to the development of the new generation of modern technologies.

Democracies, in contrast, have proved an extremely fertile soil for such technological inventiveness. In addition to giving the democracies an enormous economic advantage over more repressive states, many of the new technologies will have direct military applications. In particular, the new precision-guidance technologies hold out solutions to two key strategic problems that have dogged the West—Western overreliance on nuclear weapons and Western strategic vulnerability.

While it is absurd to hope that new conventional weapons will make nuclear weapons "obsolete" (as nuclear weapons were once foolishly believed by some to make conventional weapons obsolete), precision conventional weapons will add new flexibility to Western strategy and may, in selected applications, perform missions once assigned to nuclear arms. Moreover, even in the near future, precision-guidance technologies applied to the problem of strategic defense could decisively strengthen the U.S. nuclear deterrent by protecting our strategic forces against massive or selective preemption and by affording some limited, and psychologically welcome, protection to the American population in the event of small-scale nuclear attack.

Yet the START agreement will decisively hamper both developments. Because of the difficulty of distinguishing between nuclear- and conventionally-armed weapons for purposes of arms-control verification, the START agreement could well place severe constraints on conventionally- as well as nuclear-armed cruise and ballistic missiles. There is precedent for this already in the INF treaty, which, to almost everybody's surprise, resulted in a permanent ban on the conventionally-armed ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM)—because of an inability to distinguish it from the nuclear version. Rather than being reduced, therefore, reliance on nuclear weapons is likely to be heightened by strategic arms control. And, of course, because of the capacity of the Soviets to hold SDI testing hostage to a cessation in scheduled arms reductions, the START agreement will mean the effective end to chances for deploying strategic defenses.

In other words, at the very point when we are in a position to begin to alleviate our vulnerability, the effect of arms control will be to seal it forever. This is clearly the Soviet aim. In the guise of moving us away from nuclear weapons and reducing the risk of nuclear war, the strategic-arms-control agreement we are now negotiating will have the opposite effect. The impact of a START agreement would not only be to rivet our attention on the threat of nuclear holocaust by permanently ensuring U.S. vulnerability to missile attack. It will also rescue the Soviet drive for military hegemony at the very point when the Soviets might otherwise be forced, by historical trends and the decline of their own economy, into a reduced military effort.

IRONICALLY, in the absence of arms control, disarmament is likely to occur of its own accord. Our own military spending is already being cut back for budgetary reasons. More important, given their economic problems, the Soviets will be forced in the near future to choose between seriously holding back on their military effort or losing further vital ground in the economic sphere and thus being forced to reduce military power in the future. It is even conceivable that the Communist party will be forced to permit a measure of autonomy in private life in order to facilitate the Soviet economic recovery (though it should be noted that many of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms are actually headed in the opposite direction—toward tightening social discipline, reducing alcohol consumption, and so forth). For the Soviets, the alternative to reviving their economy may be to abdicate superpower status. From the Communist party's viewpoint, the need to reform the economy is most pressing precisely because a weak economy erodes the base for the party's military power and world influence. However, START—whose dislocating effect on our strategic forces will be much greater than on the forces of the Soviet Union—will largely

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relieve the Soviets of the need to make such hard choices. By curbing our own military effort we will be relaxing much of the pressure for reform.

In addition, the wider détente that is destined to accompany a strategic-arms agreement will enrich the Soviets with Western capital and Western technology. The crowning irony is that the Soviet leaders will be able to exploit Western wealth and Western inventiveness to rebuild their own economic and military strength, only to renew at a higher level the challenge they pose to our survival and interests and the barrier they pose to their own people's liberation.

Powerful psychological forces are preventing our own country from grasping these realities or perceiving with clarity the strategic alternatives before us. The utopianism of the President, the myopia and strategic incomprehension of the State Department professionals who guide Secretary of State George Shultz, the naked arms-control advocacy of the Establishment media, the partisan anti-defense feeling in Congress, and the intellectual paralysis of the strategic community itself —all these influences are conspiring to blind us to the nature of the critical choices that confront us.

III

IT WOULD be one thing if the START agreement were capable of delivering, even in the narrowest sense, what it purportedly promises to deliver—namely, an increase in "crisis stability," or a meaningful reduction in Soviet first-strike potential and a strengthening of the second-strike retaliatory forces on both sides. Yet the provisions of the agreement fail to accomplish even this. Hence, the anxiety, even alarm, emerging among what are usually regarded as more moderate strategic analysts.

Take, for example, retired General Brent Scowcroft, National Security Adviser to President Ford and chairman of the prestigious Scowcroft Commission on strategic forces in 1983, who writes with two Democratic colleagues, former Carter administration officials R. James Woolsey and John Deutsch. The Scowcroft group fears that the "fast-moving strategic arms negotiations" are leading to results that could "decrease stability and damage our allies' confidence in our deterrent." The authors warn of "dramatic consequences" in the absence of changes in policy.

The problem, as an increasing number of analysts have come to recognize, lies in the crucial START "sublimits"—the restrictions covering specific specific kinds of weapons. Sublimits make all the difference in determining whether an agreement could add to, or will undermine, stability. In START two such sublimits are particularly important. First is the sublimit, or restriction, on the number of ICBM warheads. At the presently proposed level of 3,300, this sublimit will do nothing, as Scowcroft and his colleagues recognize, to cut the power of the Soviets to use their own land-based warheads to strike preemptively at ours.

More critical is the sublimit covering "heavy missiles"—the SS-18 and its successor—whose mission is to destroy our land-based retaliatory force before it gets off the ground. The Soviets have agreed to cut their SS-18 missiles in half—from 308 to 154. This may seem a remarkable development. But it will still leave them with 1,540-plus warheads (i.e., 10-plus warheads per missile) capable of striking our land-based missiles. Since our land-based missiles (now numbering 1,000) will also be cut—in all likelihood by more than half—the vulnerability of land-based forces remains unaffected.

Moreover, as Scowcroft and his colleagues stress, soon our vulnerability will deepen. With the advent of more accurate submarine-launched ballistic missiles—which the Soviets are now developing —they will have the capacity to strike our ICBMs and bombers in a single coordinated attack. It was partly the lack of such a capability that caused the Scowcroft Commission to play down the importance of the "window of vulnerability" in 1983. Now the feared development is around the corner.

To add to the problem, the START agreement will significantly *cut* our comparatively invulnerable force of ballistic missiles at sea. At present we have approximately 5,600 such warheads on 37 ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs). Given the necessary rationing of warheads among ICBMs, bombers, and submarines, and under the "counting rules" agreed to at the Washington summit for the Trident missile of 8 warheads, the START treaty will cut that SSBN force to about 18, of which normally only 10 or 11 submarines can be kept at sea at any one time.

But the START treaty does nothing to cut or restrict the Soviet attack submarines—now numbering 100—whose mission is to track and destroy our SSBNs. The ratio of Soviet attack submarines to U.S. SSBNs at sea will thus increase. Result: the least vulnerable leg of the triad is suddenly more vulnerable.

INDEED, one of the major unrecognized problems with the START accord is that it cuts our retaliatory forces without affecting the Soviet weapons—e.g., attack submarines and air defenses—designed to defeat our retaliatory forces. Such an inconsistency was bearable under SALT, which permitted vast increases in the number of deliverable warheads. When warheads are being reduced by approximately 50 percent, however, the effect of *uncontrolled* weapons on the strategic balance becomes vastly greater. At present the Soviets have extensive air defenses (we have nothing comparable) and an operational ABM system (we have none).

The solution to this quandary? Scowcroft and his colleagues renew the Scowcroft Commission

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recommendation to proceed with the deployment of the Midgetman or small mobile ICBM. This, however, would necessitate lifting the present ban in the U.S. START proposal on mobile missiles. It would also provide only a few hundred survivable warheads to replace thousands that we are losing under the treaty, either because of the reductions themselves or because of increased vulnerability.

Moreover, this solution, such as it is, entails several problems of its own.

First, the inclusion of mobile missiles in a START treaty will probably render unverifiable a treaty already marked by serious verification problems. In the Soviet Union, a heavily forested, frequently overcast country eleven time zones wide, mobile missiles pose verification problems on a wholly different scale from those encountered in SALT, where verification chiefly involved counting fixed missile silos, or concrete holes in the ground. (Note that the INF agreement does not attempt to *limit* mobile missiles, but to *ban* them. Bans are generally easier to verify than limitations, but even here there may be problems.) The inclusion of mobile missiles might well add to stability, but it can do so only at the price of radically undercutting the verifiability of the agreement—an especially serious problem when arsenals are being cut by approximately 50 percent, and incentives to cheat are high.

Second, it is not clear that road mobile missiles can be dispersed widely enough in the United States to render them effectively invulnerable to preemptive attack. The Soviet Union can move missiles around its vast territory at will. In a democracy, one faces what the Pentagon calls the "public-interface" problem: namely, the fact that people do not like the idea of nuclear-armed ICBMs cruising down the highways at night. Protesters are likely both to monitor and to block the travel of such missiles.

Finally, setting aside the issue of Midgetman's effectiveness, there is a crucial problem of timing. If the Reagan administration has its way, the START agreement will be signed this year. However, even if everything goes as planned, the Midgetman will not be ready for *initial* deployment (i.e., the first few missiles) until 1992. Nor is it inconceivable that there could be delays in reaching this schedule or serious problems after deployment—such as those which reportedly render the MX missile ineffective today.

The same problem is present in even more glaring form in the suggestion of another leading commentator, former Carter administration Defense Secretary Harold Brown, for solving the equally perplexing problem of increased submarine vulnerability under START. Brown, a supporter of the START agreement, nonetheless shares the Scowcroft group's concern with increasing vulnerability and advocates the Midgetman as a solution. His recommendation for submarines? That we cease producing our newest submarine, the Trident, and begin designing a smaller submarine so as to disperse our SLBMs among more vessels.

But this is hardly a minor adjustment to the American arsenal. To produce a new ballistic-missile submarine will take at least a decade. Under Brown's logic, we would sign on to START reductions in 1988 and hope by perhaps 1998 to 2000 to have systems available to offset the huge vulnerability that will open as a result of the agreement. All of which assumes the new system arrives without significant bugs.

This to say nothing of the cost of the new submarine (or for that matter Midgetman, with a price tag of $50 billion) and the enormous resources wasted by discarding the Trident. Readers may remember that once upon a time a goal of strategic arms control was to save money. However, by the time one computes the costs of START—the costs of destroying weapons, of paying on-site inspection teams, of improving our satellite capability to address new problems of verification as well as the costs for new weapons to replace perfectly effective weapons that have become excessively vulnerable under the terms of the agreement—it is quite possible that defense with START will prove more expensive than defense without START. At a time when our resources are diminishing and the INF agreement necessitates an increasing focus on conventional weapons, this hardly seems a prudent course.

From all this it should be apparent that even some of our best strategic analysts are not thinking terribly logically these days about our most important strategic problems. Note the two common strains running through these commentaries.

First, the projected improvements in our security are coming, mysteriously enough, not from the weapons reductions, but from weapons increases—new deployments which the agreement will necessitate. (This should not surprise us; such has unfortunately always been the case under arms control.)

Second, with remarkable consistency, these commentators overlook the most logical and obvious solution to the problems they identify—namely, to refrain from making the reductions in the first place. If in fact deep arms reductions under START are going to raise the prospect of all these grave instabilities and dislocations, if in fact deep reductions are not going to reduce but rather to increase our vulnerability, if in fact deep reductions cannot be effectively verified, then why, in heaven's name, embark on them in the first place?

The obviousness of the question is almost overwhelming; and yet there is a huge reluctance to ask it. Why? Some are apparently blinded by the illusory belief that parchment guarantees peace. Others may see the real drawbacks of START

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clearly enough but are all too keenly aware of the political price to be paid for raising questions about the logic and desirability of arms control.

IV

YET it cannot be entirely accidental that after nearly twenty years of strategic-arms-control negotiations the United States has failed to achieve the central goal of using arms limitations to improve "crisis stability" by curtailing first-strike forces. On the contrary, it is precisely under strategic arms control that the Soviets have developed their capability to destroy U.S. ICBMs preemptively. A strong case can be made that arms-control agreements—in particular, the limits on strategic defenses in the 1972 ABM treaty—facilitated this development by leaving our ICBMs undefended. At any rate, arms-control negotiations did nothing to prevent it. To the degree that we have prevented ICBM vulnerability from becoming a catastrophic problem thus far, it is not through any negotiated arms limitations but through our own technology and deployments—in particular, our superior force of ballistic-missile submarines. And now the START treaty promises sharply to reduce that.

The reason that arms-control negotiations have failed to achieve their avowed main purpose is plain enough: the Soviets, whatever their public professions, have never shared it. Arms control was based on a scientific theory. The theory said that if both sides agreed to keep their countries undefended and their strategic arsenals invulnerable to each other's strategic weapons, there would be a condition of strategic stability. Each side would be able to retaliate against the other; neither could gain a decisive advantage by striking first. This could be shown to be true on paper with some mathematical precision. But achieving arms control was a matter not of proving theorems but of engaging in politics. Politically the Soviets never embraced—indeed, it is not clear they really understood or at least cared about—the Western concept of "crisis stability." (Of course they understand and write about it now, but that is partly a matter of their propaganda becoming more sophisticated.)

The Soviets have been operating under a different paradigm. Long after references to the idea of winning nuclear war disappeared all too systematically from their public statements, their actions have demonstrated that they continue to maintain a belief in the traditional military calculus of superiority and inferiority, winning and losing, even in the nuclear age. There is such a thing—this too can be shown on paper, horrendous as such a calculation might seem—as superiority and inferiority once nuclear weapons are brought into play. Such military superiority might not be readily usable in a military sense; but as the Soviets have realized, long before it is usable on the battlefield, it can begin to have effects in the political sphere. In sharp contrast to Americans, who tend to approach arms control in a spirit of pragmatic idealism, the Soviets, schooled by Lenin, have always viewed the arms-control process as merely one sphere in a broader, life-and-death political struggle with the West. The West regards arms control as a deliverance from power politics; the Soviet Union regards arms control as a tool of the political struggle.

So when the United States, after SALT I, exercised unilateral restraint on counterforce capability—deliberately refraining from the deployment of counterforce warheads in sufficient numbers to threaten Soviet land-based missiles with preemption—the Soviets predictably failed to reciprocate. Instead, they moved as rapidly as possible to develop and deploy weapons capable of destroying U.S. Minuteman and Titan missiles in their silos.

Oddly, often enough it has not been so much the actual provisions of the agreements as the asymmetrical fashion in which the two nations have responded to them that has led to the present imbalances between the two sides. In general, the United States has exercised considerably more self-restraint under arms agreements than has been strictly required. The Soviet Union has exercised demonstrably less. To put it somewhat differently, the United States habitually "overcomplies" with its arms-control obligations; the Soviet Union, by contrast, nearly always "undercomplies." The net effect is that the balance of forces under arms control has shifted to the Soviet side.

Such a pattern has been apparent in the two powers' behavior under the unratified SALT II agreement. The agreement permitted each side to test one "new type" of ICBM. The United States tested its one new type—the MX—but failed to deploy the full complement of such missiles (at present only 50 out of an originally proposed total of 200 have been deployed). The Soviet Union, in contrast, violated the treaty by testing and subsequently deploying two new types—the SS-24 and the SS-25. Since the agreement expired and the United States disavowed it in response to Soviet violations, the Soviets have tested what appears to be yet a third new type—their planned replacement for the SS-18 missile.

Coupled with this, the United States has proved incapable of responding to these serious violations. When President Reagan decided in response to Soviet violations to end unilateral U.S. compliance with the unratified and expired SALT II agreement, there was a huge outcry, Congress voted to restrict U.S. defense modernization in order to keep the U.S. in compliance with those provisions of the agreement that the Soviets had not yet managed to breach.

NOWHERE has the contrast between the two nations' approaches been more striking than in behavior under the ABM treaty.

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After the 1974 protocol to the ABM treaty was signed, Congress rapidly moved, at the urging of Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, an ideological opponent of ABM, to close the one permitted U.S. ABM site at Grand Forks, North Dakota. A prudent nation would have preserved Grand Forks as a hedge against Soviet ABM developments; this would have made SDI less of a thorny, ideological issue today. However, in the era of détente and arms control, not even a Republican administration was prepared to fight for maintaining the site. The broad assumption was that the world was moving toward a "no-defense" environment. Research and development for ABM in the United States, excluding money for Grand Forks, dropped between 1971 and 1975 by a factor of seven.

Once again the Soviets failed to follow suit. In the 1970's, the pace of Soviet research and development for strategic defense steadily increased. They did not close down their permitted Moscow ABM site but eventually expanded and upgraded it. Hardly was the ink dry on the treaty, moreover, before the Soviets were violating the agreement, testing SA-2 and SA-5 surface-to-air missiles in an illegal "ABM mode." (In conformity with the spirit of the age, these violations were quietly "resolved" in the U.S.-USSR Standing Consultative Commission without public controversy or even charges of violations—but only after the Soviets had performed over 50 such tests and gleaned whatever results were to be had from them. Moreover, despite "resolution" of the issue in the SCC, the Soviets, as Brian D. Dailey has noted in a recent study, resumed testing of the SA-5 in an ABM mode in 1980.) Since then there has been an emerging pattern of further probable or actual violations, including construction of a huge phased-array radar at Krasnoyarsk and more recently movement of "Flat Twin" and "Pawn Shop" radars to prohibited locations.

At the very least, this does not present the picture of a nation that has abandoned the idea of strategic defenses. SDI might easily be seen as a prudent and indeed legitimate response to Soviet ABM violations. Once again, however, Congress has voted to prevent SDI testing under an interpretation of the ABM treaty apparently more narrow than the Soviets themselves embraced in 1972.

If the original advocates of the ABM treaty proved wrong about the Soviets' acceptance of the "no-defense" principle, they also proved wrong about the offensive side of the equation. The ABM treaty was originally designed to stabilize the offensive arms race. That was its chief rationale. At the time of its signing, the Soviets had approximately 2,500 strategic warheads. They now have in excess of 10,000.

At the same time, advocates of the arms-control process have attempted to shield it from an appearance of failure by continually redefining what constitutes success. At first we were going to convince the Soviets of the virtues of a "no-defense world" and "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) —i.e., get them to accept Western conceptions. Then when the Soviets failed to adopt such conceptions (as evidenced by their deployments), we were told their state of mind didn't matter: MAD was a "fact of life." By the same token, originally the arms-control process was aimed at concretely improving stability. Now that such stabilizing limits have eluded us for nearly twenty years, the goal has become notably vaguer and less concrete: we now seek "predictability," "easing of tensions," and so forth. We even seek reductions for their own sake, apparently, though they demonstrably fail to add to stability.

In the meantime, by various concrete indicators of military strength, the strategic balance has steadily shifted against us. Indeed, the notion that we have been reducing the "risk of war" through arms control is hardly more than a dream. What we have been steadily reducing is the likelihood that the United States will respond effectively to various Soviet initiatives in the military sphere.

V

THE Reagan program of deep reductions was originally designed to highlight and rectify some of these problems. At bottom, the administration's proposals for "deep reductions" were essentially an attempt to call the bluff of arms control—to determine whether arms negotiations could indeed finally deliver what they had always promised: genuinely stabilizing, militarily significant limits and cuts. However, because the Soviets had historically shown themselves resistant to meaningful arms reductions (as in their rejection of President Carter's deep-cuts proposals in March 1977), there was also a high probability that bargaining positions like the "zero option" for INF missiles and "deep reductions" for strategic arms would lead to no agreement at all.

For administration conservatives who advocated this approach, such an outcome was not unwelcome. This is not to say that the strategy was entirely disingenuous. Standing at the threshold of the Reagan era, one could easily convince oneself that if the Soviets did indeed accept "deep reductions" and agree to such radical alterations in the strategic balance at Western behest, then arms control would be operating (*mirabile dictu*) in a beneficial fashion. At bottom, however, the call for "deep reductions" was a kind of metaphor for what arms control really ought to do, what it had so far failed to do, and what it was in fact unlikely to do in the future, given the nature and aims of of the Soviet regime.

For a time the metaphor operated as predicted. The Soviets fiercely resisted the zero option and strategic-arms reductions. Moscow tried to blackmail and bludgeon the United States into turning back NATO's plan to deploy intermediate-range

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missiles in Europe in 1983 in response to its own deployment of the SS-20 beginning in 1977. In essence the conflict over INF was a test of wills, an effort by the Soviet Union to determine whether it could veto a NATO deployment and force Washington into a renewal of détente on Moscow's terms. The attempt failed. For a time, indeed, the United States seemed to have captured the moral high ground. For a change, arms-control rhetoric mirrored reality. The power more dedicated to peace—the United States—also had the more daring arms proposals, while the power threatening the peace eventually walked out of arms negotiations. The breakdown of negotiations also led to a fresh and healthy interest in unilateral means of strengthening defense—in particular, the investigation of new defensive technologies through the SDI program.

Yet once the tactics of open blackmail had failed, the Soviets reverted to their accustomed tactical flexibility. "They will try every door in the house," said Winston Churchill in 1946, "enter all rooms which are not locked, and when they come to one that is barred, if they are unsuccessful in breaking through it, they will withdraw and invite you to dine genially that same evening." Not long after the SDI program was given a director and a budget in the spring of 1984 came the inevitable invitations to dine. But more surprising, under Gorbachev the leadership proved willing to take tactical flexibility a step further: to sacrifice something quite tangible, namely, operational SS-20 missiles, in exchange for a broad intangible gain—a resurgence of arms control, a momentum toward nuclear disarmament, and, crucially, an end to the Strategic Defense Initiative.

As surprising as the Soviet embrace of reductions may have been, it does not seem illogical in retrospect. The inherent asymmetry of the arms-control process; the fact that arms reductions will now tend to intensify, rather than alleviate, American vulnerabilities; the fact that Congress, in its moralism and legalism, can be counted upon to overcomply with almost any negotiated limitation; and finally the fact that the U.S. media will tend to play down, and Congress will resist responding to, serious Soviet violations of an agreement—all this makes a continuation and expansion of arms control extremely desirable, not to say vital, from the Soviet point of view.

In the meantime, those who believe they hear in Gorbachev's public utterances a fundamentally new Soviet approach to the problem of peace are missing another, equally pronounced, strain in the current Soviet rhetoric: the menacing undercurrent of intimidation. It was apparent in Gorbachev's September 1985 interview with the editors of *Time*: "[The] situation today is highly complex, very tense. . . . I would even go so far as to say it is explosive." It was apparent after Reykjavik: "America is probably very nostalgic for the old times when it was militarily superior to us—for we emerged from the war weakened economically. . . . Nevertheless, we will wish our American partners to be aware of today's *realities*" (emphasis added). It was apparent even amid the euphoria of the Washington summit. As Valentin Falin, head of the Novosti Press Agency, told New York *Times* columnist Flora Lewis, if America failed to accommodate to the Soviet Union, especially on SDI, Gorbachev would "draw the consequences":

> We won't copy you any more, making planes to catch up with your planes, missiles to catch up with your missiles. We'll take asymmetrical means with new scientific principles available to us. *Genetic engineering could be a hypothetical example.* Things can be done for which neither side could find defenses or countermeasures, with very dangerous results.
>
> If you develop something in space, we could develop something on earth. *These are not just words. I know what I'm saying.* [Emphasis added]

To be contemplating 50-percent arms cuts with a power whose public officials threaten us openly in our own capital with the prospect of biological warfare based on the new technologies of genetic engineering (mere development of the weapons constituting a gross violation of the binding but unenforceable and unverifiable Biological Weapons Convention of 1972) is remarkable, to say the least. Yet intimidation, by word and action, has been the constant accompaniment of the arms-control process.

Note too that Soviet internal reforms and shifts in rhetoric (*perestroika, glasnost*), whatever their nature or limitations, have been carefully repackaged for Western consumption in the service of encouraging Western concessions on arms control. Gorbachev the reformer is a self-confessed admirer of Lenin, whom he praises for "lofty moral strength." Lenin, who looked with contempt on pacifist feeling in all its forms, explicitly taught his followers to use disarmament to divide and inhibit the West while Soviet military and economic power grew. Gorbachev's approach, whatever novelty or flexibility it demonstrates as to concrete details, is clearly in this mold.

However, Gorbachev's tactical shift has revealed another fact—that for President Reagan, arms reductions apparently never were the complicated metaphor that they constituted for the conservative intellectuals within his administration. For the President, reductions had apparently always been a literal goal.

TODAY, as a result of all this, we are rushing toward radical disarmament at an incredible speed. A dangerous START treaty, an almost equally dangerous and clearly unverifiable chemical-weapons ban, possible cuts in conventional forces that would worsen rather than improve the existing imbalance—all these possibilities wait in the wings while Senate attention is engrossed with INF.

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The INF agreement is problematic enough. But the INF agreement, whatever its deleterious effects on NATO's strategy or its potentially depressing impact on Western public support for nuclear deterrence, does not reshape the core of our strategic arsenal. Responsible experts differ on the merits of the INF treaty. Where most sober analysts agree is that the administration's manner of negotiating the agreement from the Reykjavik summit onward damaged, possibly irreparably, the morale and cohesion of the Western alliance. This has implications for START. Indeed, one of the most troubling aspects of the INF agreement is what it says about the resistance with which the Reagan administration can be expected to greet even the soundest and most moderate criticism of the prospective START accord.

As is true of START today, months before the United States signed the INF agreement a chorus of distinguished voices emerged questioning the advisability of the treaty—voices ranging from Brent Scowcroft to former U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick to Henry Kissinger to General Bernard Rogers, the NATO commander himself. Not only were the warnings deflected; the Secretary of State characterized the NATO commander's reservations as—it is incredible to say—"ridiculous." Not only was the administration willing to dismiss authoritative criticism out of hand, but it was also willing to defend an indefensible outcome.

Today we have an INF agreement embodying a double-zero option. But when Gorbachev first made clear, at the height of the Iran-*contra* controversy in February 1987, his willingness to sign an INF treaty, the agreement at issue was not the "true zero" solution but the "0-100" solution with which the administration emerged from Reykjavik. In the manifold confusions of that meeting, the United States had actually agreed to a formula that would have permitted the Soviets to retain 100 INF warheads in Soviet Asia while requiring the U.S. to withdraw its residual 100 warheads to the United States. Yet repeatedly, the administration publicly affirmed its willingness to sign such an agreement—even though the agreement was patently inequitable and even though it posed possibly insurmountable problems of verification.

Eventually, the Soviets took the administration's chestnuts out of the fire by agreeing to "true zero" —probably because the Soviets themselves recognized that even if such an agreement had been signed, it would not have passed the Senate. But the fact remains that, apparently to save its own credibility, the administration charged ahead heedlessly toward a demonstrably bad result, prodding and hurrying our reluctant allies—especially West Germany—along the way.

As sorry a spectacle as this may have been, in START the stakes are far higher. Unfortunately, the administration can be expected to prove equally impervious to criticism, even from the most credible and authoritative sources. Ronald Reagan bent on disarmament has become an almost unstoppable force. Certainly, he will not be restrained by a Secretary of State whose strategic comprehension is open to question, even if his commitment to arms control is not. And in too many cases, the natural opponents of rashness in arms control are implicated as authors or longtime supporters of the U.S. proposals at issue.

Yet the process must be halted. It simply makes no sense to halve our nuclear arsenal until we have witnessed a commensurate decline in the threat posed by the Soviet Union. A broad and clearly demonstrable improvement in Soviet behavior should not be the *goal* but rather the *prerequisite* of arms control on this scale. Thus far we have had many tantalizing hints from Moscow, many symbolic actions on human rights and regional conflict. At the same time few would argue that the underlying realities of Soviet foreign policy or domestic power have in any fundamental way altered. What we have seen instead is what Jean-François Revel has called "the manic Soviet penchant for seeking always to collect in advance the strategic and diplomatic dividends of changes that are either entirely hypothetical, or at best no more than rudimentary." And amid all this, we continue to hear ominous threats.

It is not enough to attempt, as Henry Kissinger and others have done, to link strategic reductions to conventional reductions (though if that is what it takes to persuade the administration to delay a START signing, then so be it). In conventional arms control our bargaining position is hardly better than in nuclear systems; indeed, it is worse. To expect conventional reductions of the sort we actually require from the Soviets is essentially to expect the Soviets to solve our strategic problems for us. It is to say that the Soviets have ceased competing with us in a military sense. If that occurs, we shall all rejoice, but there will be other signs of it than a willingness to talk about conventional arms cuts. For too long strategic analysts of Kissinger's stature have paid lip-service to the illusory premise of arms control—the assumption that the Soviets will act in negotiations positively to enhance Western security—which, after all, their whole military effort is designed to undermine.

THOSE, meanwhile, who apparently see this as a moment that must be seized for arms control or lost forever are simply succumbing to the cart-before-the-horse logic of the arms-control process. If indeed the Soviet Union needs to redirect spending away from defense, if there is downward pressure on Soviet defense spending, then disarmament is going to happen without U.S. help. If at a time when its military strength far exceeds any requirement of sufficiency, the Soviet Union is unwilling to make such a reallocation on its own without fresh concessions from the United States, then it is plainly not committed to peace.

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Similarly, if there is a genuine opportunity for improved relations, the opportunity will be there next year, and the year after and the year after that. If the opportunity is so momentary and tenuous that it will disappear if it is not seized today, at great risk to our national security, then the opportunity is not authentic but illusory. An opportunity so fragile should give us pause. If the present alleged trend toward peaceableness in Soviet behavior is capable so quickly of being reversed, then we should worry even more deeply about the new vulnerabilities and instabilities to which a START agreement will inevitably expose us. We shall surely be in a worse position to respond to such a reversal after the treaty is signed.

This is not a partisan or ideological point, but a matter of common sense. Sensible people of the Right and sensible people of the Left, Republicans and Democrats who have the nation's security at heart, should be willing to agree on a program of delay and reappraisal in arms control. Given the enormous changes we have seen in the very premises of the process just in the past few months, nothing else makes sense. Above all, it would greatly serve the national interest if the Senate leadership were to make clear to the President that it would not look favorably on a START treaty before the end of his term. This alone might persuade the executive branch to relent and take stock. And yet it is only reasonable. If disarmament on this scale can be achieved, and achieved safely, then it should be left, at the least, to a new President, and to an administration with a more balanced sense of the process's opportunities and risks.

Finally, the burden of proof must be shifted to those who advocate arms cuts, particularly on this radical a scale, to demonstrate concretely how these cuts will improve our security, to show precisely how they will be verified, and to explain exactly what basis we have to believe that the Soviets will comply with them or that the United States would be in a position to respond effectively if they do not. In the absence of proof on all these counts, reductions should be avoided.

Forget for a moment public relations. Forget the "moral high ground." A nation that lacks the moral self-confidence to pursue the measures necessary for its defense in the face of criticism from misguided idealists on the one hand and its mortal enemy on the other has lost the capacity to survive. Public relations cannot be the measure of our success in preserving peace and freedom. Public-relations successes and public-relations failures daily come and go. But the concrete guarantees of our security are irretrievable, once they have been bargained away.

The risk if we say no to the present program of radical arms control is at most some embarrassment—and yet another setback in the long history of disappointments in disarmament. The risk if we say yes is the loss of our basic security, and ultimately—can anyone doubt it?—the relinquishment of freedom itself.

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As I See Gorbachev

Natan Sharansky

THREE days before the Reagan-Gorbachev summit last December, I was invited to a briefing at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. in which four Soviet officials—in the new spirit of *glasnost*—spent 90 minutes answering journalists' questions. It did not take long to realize that while now smiles were allowed to crack the grim visages of the actors, and sweet courtesy was replacing rude and clumsy stonewalling, the script of the show was the same: the same tired catechisms, the same doubletalk, and the same fear of making "mistakes."

"What about violations of the Helsinki accords?" asked a reporter.

"You have a suit on and I have a suit on. Your suit wouldn't suit me and my suit wouldn't suit you. We shouldn't try to switch suits," answered Albert Vlasov, Communist party spokesman.

"Why have you not tried to publish the October 21 speech of Boris Yeltsin?" asked another.

"We thought it incorrect to publish a speech delivered at the party plenum," said Yegor Yakovlev, editor of the Moscow *News*. And Vitaly Korotich, editor of *Ogonyok* magazine, the flagship of *glasnost*, chimed in: "As a member of the party I would not dream of permitting myself to violate party discipline and disobey its instructions."

"When are you going to have a free press?" yelled an impatient questioner.

"We have a free press!" answered Yakovlev.

I was experiencing *déjà vu*, as if I were back at the Moscow headquarters of the KGB in the 70's. I said to a reporter, "You see, at the lower levels, the KGB is rude and rough, but at the top they are rather intellectual and smooth. The way they answer questions now is a lot like that. They acknowledge almost every problem in the distant past, but they really won't confront problems that are still going on now. *Glasnost* is not a form of freedom. It's just a new set of instructions on what is and isn't permitted."

To my surprise, my remarks and my picture got almost as much space as the Soviets did in the following morning's Washington *Post*. To my even greater surprise, the day the story appeared a brick was tossed into my host's car—in which he had driven me from the briefing—while it was parked in front of his home. It smashed the rear window and reached the steering wheel, leading the police to believe that it had been thrown from a passing vehicle. In Moscow, correspondents who drove spokesmen of dissidents around would find their cars with punctured tires in the morning. The *déjà vu* was complete.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV is a huge success in the West. Viewed as more honest, more talented, and more courageous than his predecessors, he has induced a euphoria in the media, in the public, and among politicians. He regularly bests Western leaders in public-opinion polls. He, not Ronald Reagan, is the hero of the arms-control agreement and his *glasnost* and *perestroika*, now securely ensconced in our language, are viewed as harbingers of even better things to come. The conventional wisdom is that he is on the right track, that while he cannot change everything at once ("he has opposition in the Kremlin and in the bureaucracy, you know") he will, given time and Western support, bring democracy and renewed vigor to the Soviet Union and peace to the world. Concomitantly, most seem to believe that the Soviet people, like a sleeping princess now awakening to the kiss of *glasnost*, are pining for Western-style democracy and ecstatically relish the daily broadening of their horizons.

There is something very winning in this optimistic view. But it fails to consider the genesis, purpose, and depth of Gorbachev's reforms, and it underestimates what generations of coercion, negligence, tyranny, and brutality have done to the soul of the Russian people.

Not that the reforms have been insignificant. Some have been dramatic and, in the context of Soviet society, even revolutionary. But a comparison with the upheaval which led to Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power in the 50's is instructive. Then, the KGB chief was executed, and the KGB's

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iron grip on the government and the populace was noticeably weakened. Hundreds of thousands were released from the gulag, exonerated, and rehabilitated.

Under Gorbachev the KGB may be more subtle and sophisticated, and careful to keep a low profile. But there is no sign that its powers have been curtailed. With its blessing, and using *glasnost* as a license, Nazi-like anti-Semitic gangs have been allowed to organize and grow, to distribute *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* freely, and to assault Jews in the streets, thus doing the KGB's dirty work without reflecting directly on the regime. Jailed refuseniks, known as "prisoners of Zion," and a few score of dissidents, mostly "celebrities" famous in the West, have been released, but there have been no admissions of error by the regime, and none of the falsely convicted has been rehabilitated. (The privilege of rehabilitation is now reserved for figures from the 20's and 30's who were murdered by Stalin and have been non-persons ever since.)

The less publicized victims have been less fortunate, however. Anatoli Marchenko and Alexsei Niktin, proponents of free trade unions, have died in prison, and Vladimir Klebanov, another labor activist, is lost somehere in the psychiatric gulag. Vazif Meilanoff, who spent seven years in an isolation cell for the crime of protesting Andrei Sakharov's exile, is himself still in exile, and Leonid Lubman, who was arrested on trumped-up charges very similar to those used against me, and sentenced to the same term—thirteen years—is still in prison. The number of such prisoners is estimated at anywhere between 2,000 and 15,000, but only 500 of their names are known to Amnesty International. When Robert Bernstein, chairman of Helsinki Watch in America, asked Gorbachev why, after two-and-a-half years in power, he did not simply release all political prisoners, he replied, furiously, with a harangue about Americans shooting at Mexican "wetbacks."

Khrushchev, as it turned out, did indeed have strong opposition in the Kremlin—the KGB and other elements whose wings he clipped never forgave him. But until he was finally toppled, rumors of rifts in the leadership were vehemently denied by the Kremlin. Now news of opposition to Gorbachev, a KGB protégé, usually *originates* in the Kremlin and is disseminated with great fanfare. The purpose, it seems, is not only to aver that unless he is supported abroad he will be overthrown at home, but to impart the impression that the Kremlin is just like any other government, with hawks and doves vying for influence.

ANOTHER useful comparison can be drawn in the area of emigration—this time between Gorbachev the "reformer" and Brezhnev the "ruthless dictator." Under Gorbachev the number of Jewish applicants granted exit visas jumped from 1,000 in 1986 to 8,000 in 1987. Under *glasnost*-less Brezhnev, almost 300,000 Jews left the Soviet Union in the 1970's, 51,000 of them in the peak year of 1979.

It is testimony to Gorbachev's skill that the sudden but far from impressive increase in exit permits, accompanied by hints, winks, and veiled promises by Soviet officials to visiting Jewish leaders, gave rise to hopes of massive Jewish emigration. In the general euphoria, many failed to realize that the new Soviet emigration law enacted under Gorbachev is not designed to facilitate emigration but to terminate it. It limits eligibility for emigration to those who can receive invitations from blood relatives of the first degree living abroad—parents, children, or siblings. It thus excludes over 90 percent of the 400,000 Jews who have indicated their desire to leave.

The Soviet authorities, now in a post-summit mode and flush with Gorbachev's popular success, are stringently enforcing these draconian restrictions. The new regulations also stipulate that of the 10 percent eligible to apply, those who possess "state secrets" would automatically be turned down. (The Soviets have applied this restriction to, among others, a seventy-four-year-old widow whose mathematician husband died seventeen years ago, under the pretext that he might have left her "state secrets.")

Not surprisingly, the number of would-be emigrants now refused visas on these grounds has drastically increased, and some old-time refuseniks have been notified that previous reasons for rejecting their applications have been canceled only to be replaced by "security considerations." Even relatives of such refuseniks, known in the dark humor of Jewish activists as "genetic security risks," are thus excluded. And since applying under these conditions courts being branded a traitor willing to compromise state secrets, a potential applicant would have to contemplate the possibility not only of being fired and harassed and of living in limbo for many years but of imprisonment for treason. The few who succeed in getting through this sieve are required to provide an affidavit from all relatives, including in-laws and ex in-laws, that there are no financial claims against them. A brand-new regulation stipulates that they must pass a psychiatric examination to ascertain their sanity before they can exit.

Lest it be forgotten, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, reaffirmed in the Helsinki accords, to which the USSR is a signatory, clearly states that the right to leave any country, including one's own, is a basic human right. Contracts obviously mean different things to different people. Or, as the Communist party spokesman put it in Washington, "Your suit wouldn't suit me and my suit wouldn't suit you."

The one area in which *glasnost* has had to "give" more is the field of communications and the arts. Even seventy years of primitive conformism have not completely destroyed the Russian genius in

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literature, music, and dance, or suppressed the ferment among the intelligentsia and artistic community. To assuage the envy with which the Soviet intelligentsia view the freedom their colleagues in other Communist countries have been enjoying for decades, creative editors have been appointed at newspapers and magazines, and such subjects as crime, drug addiction, corruption, the Afghan war, and even—though rarely—anti-Semitism, all hitherto virtually taboo, are now discussed. Some banned dead writers, including Boris Pasternak, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Vladimir Nabokov can now be read, and even a live émigré, Nobel-prize-winner Joseph Brodsky, is being published. Marc Chagall's paintings, previously considered prime examples of "bourgeois decadence," were exhibited in Moscow last year, albeit without mentioning his Jewishness, and the movie *Repentance*, a potent denunciation of Stalinist terror, though still cautious enough never to mention him by name, is a big hit. The restless energies of Soviet youth, for whom anything Western is a seductive symbol of liberty, have been placated by the legitimizing of rock, jazz, and jeans.

Other foreign influences, however, have not fared so well. At last year's Moscow book fair, forty English-language books and twenty Russian books published outside the USSR were confiscated, and foreign artists of whose affiliations and sympathies the Soviet Union does not approve, including such luminaries as Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, Itzhak Perlman, and Daniel Barenboim, cannot perform there.

The traditional fear of foreign influence is matched by the traditional horror of demonstrations and rallies, and of the uncontrollable momentum they might create. When a large group of Tatars, a people exiled by the Soviet authorities from their land during World War II and never allowed to return, tried to demonstrate in front of the Kremlin, they were forcibly packed into buses and driven away. When a hundred refuseniks gathered in Moscow on the day a quarter of a million Jews marched in Washington to demand free emigration for Soviet Jews, they were roughed up by 200 agents of the KGB and dispersed. Peaceful protests of Jewish women in Moscow and Leningrad, by Latvians in Riga, and by Kazakhs in Alma Ata, were also forcibly put down.

WHAT is discouraging about these incidents is not that they were suppressed, but that the grabbings at the crumbs of freedom have been so few. Almost all have been expressions of national and ethnic aspirations by minorities, not a surge for liberty by the majority. This tends to confirm the pessimistic view that the apathy, fatalism, and cynicism that permeate the Soviet Union make a groundswell for greater liberty—something like the momentum for liberalization which occurred in Poland during the heyday of Solidarity—quite unlikely. Alexander Zinoviev describes the new Soviet man as an empty vessel unable to think or revolt, ignorant of the world and his own history, and conditioned to believe not that what the authorities tell him is *true* but that it must be accepted as an inevitable part of life, the way one accepts rain. And, indeed, not only the authorities consider citizens cogs in the wheel of the state, the people so consider themselves too. The Western notion that the government is subject to the constraints of law is alien to the Soviet citizen. The government *is* the law. It can grant rights to its subjects and it can take them away. It can be benevolent and it can be cruel. But, by definition, it cannot violate the law. Gorbachev has not changed this principle, nor can he do so within the framework of the system. All he has done is to increase the number of gifts the government is currently willing to bestow.

The "credit" for creating such passivity and conformity should perhaps not be given exclusively to the Communist regime. The czars, although far more liberal in allowing foreign contacts and emigration, deserve at least part of it. A decade before the Bolshevik takeover, the Stolypin reforms encouraged peasants to emerge from feudal "collectivism" and adopt free-enterprise methods. The reforms were an abysmal failure because, among other reasons, those who established successful independent farms were assaulted by fellow peasants who considered the communal tenure of the feudal village the only just and egalitarian system.

This kind of attitude puts the prospects of Gorbachev's *perestroika* into question. Gorbachev wants to introduce a modicum of free enterprise, create new incentives to prod people of talent and intelligence, and allow efficiency and productivity, rather than bureaucratic inertia, to determine the survival of plants and factories. He wants to do this without giving up the power to dictate, without a real decentralization of economic planning, and, needless to say, without allowing market forces of supply and demand into play. His reforms, at least initially, will mean more work and less vodka, higher prices and lower wages, and the dislocation of workers and unemployment. They will require enthusiasm, enterprise, and a lot of popular trust in the party-created ruling class, which is just as remote from the masses and just as privileged as the czars and noblemen who preceded them. It is a tall order.

The generalizations about the Soviet populace do not usually apply to Jews. Perhaps because they have always been considered outsiders, or because their own cultural heritage served as a powerful counterinfluence, the Jews never quite accepted enforced conformity and the obliteration of individualism. Ever since emerging from the ghetto they have tended to push for change, and the number of Jews who participated in revolution and upheaval was always grossly disproportionate to their percentage in the population. But in times

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of retrenchment, their effervescence was deemed dangerous, and they have never been considered loyal Soviet citizens. Much is being said about the possibility, the logic of which is seemingly unassailable, that Gorbachev will attempt to make life in the USSR so attractive for Jews that they will not want to leave. For most, the freedom to study Hebrew and worship in a synagogue is less important than the prospect of attending a good university and attaining a high professional position. But it is doubtful that they will be given these opportunities.

GORBACHEV'S reforms are not, then, intended to lead to the democratization of Soviet society or to any true pluralism. As he himself told the French-USSR Friendship Society last year, "We openly say that nobody will be allowed to act against socialism."

The reforms are dictated, rather, by the need to invigorate the Soviet economy, now in one of its worst slumps since the 1920's, and to reverse its decline. International factors, like the crash in oil prices, which has caused Soviet indebtedness to the West to rise to $40 billion (it may reach $60 billion by 1990), as well as industrial inefficiency, corruption, backwardness and sloth, and a lopsided defense and space-exploration budget, threaten to make the economic gap between the USSR and the West unbridgeable. Even if *perestroika* succeeds beyond expectations, the modernization of the economy cannot be achieved without Western help. The official bluster about the inevitability of socialist victory over capitalism notwithstanding, the Soviet leaders know that the limitations inherent in the Soviet system preclude successful competition with the West. But the West, wary of dark dictatorships, must be assured of Soviet benignity. As Gorbachev put it on the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, "[Our reforms] are eliminating the fear of the 'Soviet threat.' "

The formula for this was found not in Marx or Lenin, but on Madison Avenue, or, rather, through Soviet officials familiar with the American public-relations-conditioned psyche. Shapers of Soviet thinking of the old school like Boris Ponomarev were replaced by Ambassadors Anatoly Dobrynin and Aleksandr Yakovlev, who had served many years in North America. English-speaking "journalists" versed in the ways of the West, like Gennadi Gerasimov, who used to be minor apparatchiks and anonymous lackeys, are now official spokesmen. It finally dawned on the Soviet leadership that in the day of television a smile, a modulated voice, and an amicable appearance are far more effective than bullying and threats, and immeasurably more important than substance in shaping public opinion.

In the substance of Soviet foreign policy it is difficult to discern change. Despite the dire economic conditions, the Soviet Union has reduced neither its military budget nor the military aid it extends to its client states. Last summer, in a major speech in Warsaw, Gorbachev reiterated his commitment to the Brezhnev Doctrine, which sanctions Soviet intervention to defend socialist regimes from foreign attack as well as internal upheaval. He has also made it clear that while economic liberalization in Eastern Europe is welcome, there will be no loosening of either the political or the economic leash with which the USSR holds these countries.

As if to stress that arms agreements and closer ties with the West must not be allowed to change traditional Communist attitudes toward the capitalist world, there has been no letup in anti-American propaganda. Soviet papers still allege that AIDS was invented at Fort Detrick, Maryland, as a biological-warfare weapon, and that the CIA murdered the 918 members of the Jim Jones People's Temple who committed suicide in Guyana in 1978 to prevent their emigration to the USSR. But this is either unknown or ignored in the West, where the preoccupation with nuclear disarmament overshadows all else, and it has not diminished the popularity Gorbachev enjoys for signing an intermediate-range nuclear-arms agreement. There would have been no treaty had the U.S. not introduced Pershing missiles in Europe despite the four-year Soviet walkout from the arms talks and the massive demonstrations throughout the continent. And it is a measure of Gorbachev's public-relations adroitness that he successfully transformed a move dictated by strategic considerations into what is perceived as a gesture of magnanimity and peace.

At the summit he also succeeded in setting the agenda. Subjects the USSR preferred not to discuss —regional conflicts and human rights—were pushed aside. The principle of linkage, intrinsic to the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which ties "favored-nation" status in trade relations to Soviet performance on human rights, and the Helsinki accords, which tie political boundaries and security arrangements to human rights, had disappeared. A State Department official told me just before the summit that the U.S. was no longer committed to linkage *per se*. "Now," he said, "we conduct talks on the four main topics—arms, trade, regional conflicts, and human rights—in parallel fashion."

"How, then, do you expect them to make concessions in such areas as human rights or regional conflicts?" I asked.

"We count on the atmosphere to do it, and on the fact that we clearly attach similar importance to all four subjects," he replied.

To count on "atmosphere" to reverse Soviet policy is, to put it charitably, pollyannish. The Soviets encourage regional conflicts not only because they extend Soviet influence and power and serve as a trump card in dealing with the West, but because they inspire xenophobic ideological fervor in the Soviet population and a willingness to sacrifice

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and conform. That is why throughout its seventy years of existence, the Soviet Union has indiscriminately supported violent movements and regimes. Turmoil serves the Soviets well: violent conflict is the only area in which they can successfully compete with the West.

A withdrawal from Afghanistan is therefore a crucial test of Soviet intentions. For in addition to the moral, geopolitical, and strategic issues involved, it would constitute a precedent: the first time the Soviets have been willing to give up on a conflict and voluntarily relinquish a conquered piece of land. (When they joined the war against Japan in the last days of World War II, hardly engaging in the fighting with the Japanese, the Soviets captured four tiny islands near the northern coast of Japan, the largest of which, Shikotan, is barely noticeable on the map. Strategically, politically, and economically, these occupied territories are meaningless. The Japanese, who would like to have them back for reasons of national pride, have made extravagant offers, including substantial assistance in developing projects in Siberia which the Soviets cannot accomplish by themselves. But the thought of relinquishing a possession is such an anathema to the Soviets that even though they need the help, and are eager to improve relations with Japan, they have not been able to bring themselves to give up the islands.)

ANOTHER regional conflict in which the Soviets have been involved, albeit not with the Red Army but through proxies and advisers, is the Middle East. Recent Soviet moves hinting at the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel, and the resumption of such relations at a low level by Poland, have been perceived as a change of heart, as an inevitable and welcome part of the general superpower thaw. In fact they signify only a change of tactics. Soviet policy has been consistent. Even when its anti-Israel propaganda was at its most virulent, it did not want to destroy Israel. Unlike the Nazis, the Soviet rulers do not let their anti-Semitism determine foreign policy. What they want is an Israel weak enough to tantalize Arab radicals with hopes of destroying it, thus making Israel dependent on Soviet good will to squelch these hopes; and they want Arab regimes radical enough to nurse such hopes even at the price of total dependence on the Soviet Union. What they do *not* want is a strong, independent Israel capable of drawing Egypt away from the family of Soviet clients, able to frustrate Soviet-abetted terrorism by Libya, Syria, and the PLO, and ready to stabilize the region further by making its own peace with Jordan. When Gromyko says, "*Zionist* Israel is not what we voted for in the UN," he means an independent, Western-oriented, strong Israel.

To return to a position of arbiter after the defeat of its clients in the 1967 war, the Soviets floated the idea of an international peace conference on the Middle East whose participants would include the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the parties to the conflict. Except for a short-lived stab at it following the 1973 war, aborted after the opening sessions, Israel rejected the idea. But, under Gorbachev, the Soviets began to drop hints that, in return for Israeli participation in such a conference, they would resume diplomatic relations and allow free Jewish emigration.

Some Israeli leaders saw these hints as forerunners of a commitment, and agreed to an international conference, provided the PLO was excluded, and the role of the big powers was limited to the ceremonial. But for the Soviets to refrain from an active role at such a conference would contradict basic Soviet strategic and political dogma. The temptation to appear as the Arabs' active champion in forcing an Israeli withdrawal would be irresistible, as would the opportunity to pressure the U.S. to make concessions at Israel's expense.

If, say, the Soviets were to promise concessions, real or imagined, on the popular issue of arms control in return for American pressure on Israel, there is little doubt that not only the State Department but American public opinion would support the deal. And the Soviets would have a field day with Israel's eagerness to reach its two main goals —peace and the emigration of Soviet Jews. If Israel refused to yield, the Soviets might threaten that Soviet Jews would suffer from Israel's "intransigence." Activists for Soviet Jewry would then feel compelled to beg Israel to make sacrifices for the sake of Soviet Jews. Conversely, if international pressure to release Soviet Jews were to increase, the Soviets could get tougher at the conference, until the Israeli government was forced to ask for the easing of such pressure so that the Soviets would be more amenable on Middle East issues. Free of pressure from press and parliament clamoring for settlement, the Soviets enjoy an advantage at such "peace" conferences that is unbeatable.

To believe that the advent of *glasnost* justifies giving the Soviets a role in determining the fate of Israel or, for that matter, in anything at all, is to ignore the fact that neither domestic reforms nor diplomatic thaws have ever heralded a moderation of Soviet ambition. Khrushchev, the Soviet leader most committed to reform, conducted an exceptionally adventurous foreign policy. And during the détente of the 1970's, the Soviets exploited the improved international ambience, and the resultant public pressure for disarmament and disengagement in the West, to launch the biggest arms build-up in their history, foment wars in Ethiopia, Angola, the Middle East, and Nicaragua, and to invade Afghanistan.

MANY conclude from this recent history that the Western response to Soviet reforms and gestures of rapprochement should not be one of conciliation and assistance, but of rejec-

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tion and boycott, and that the troubled Soviet economy should not be rescued again the way it was salvaged in the 20's, 40's, and 70's by Western assistance, but allowed to collapse. Only thus, the reasoning goes, can today's totalitarian threat to the democracies be removed.

But to expect the West to launch a successful boycott of the Soviet Union in today's world is not realistic. The Soviets have managed to circumvent even so watertight a constraint as the Stevenson amendment, which prohibits the U.S. Export-Import bank from granting Moscow taxpayer-subsidized trade credits. By going directly to major banks, they have received billions of dollars at ridiculously low interest rates in untied loans, not linked to any specific trade deal or project. The question is not whether or not there will be deals with the Soviets but under what conditions, and with what results.

Gorbachev is the most pragmatic and most realistic of all Soviet dictators. As his reversal of the Soviet attitude to arms negotiations following the positioning of American Pershing missiles in Europe showed, he has more respect for facts than for doctrine, and if an initial idea fails, he will cast about for others. Skillful in gauging and manipulating the public mood in the West, he can become more dangerous than his predecessors. But his realism also gives room for hope, for it should enable him correctly to assess his regime's weaknesses and the real power of his adversaries. That is why it is vitally important to expose his deceptions and demonstrate massive opposition to his policies. The march of 250,000 Jews in Washington before last December's summit, decrying Soviet violations of human-rights treaties and the ongoing refusal to allow Jewish emigration, aimed at doing just that. It also showed that the gut reaction of people is sometimes healthier than that of politicians.

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Inventing Hebrew Prose

Robert Alter

Most readers of fiction these days, in Israel and elsewhere, take for granted the viability of the Hebrew language as a vehicle of modern literary expression. Hebrew novels seem to get translated into English almost as fast as they are produced in the original; writers like Yaakov Shabtai, Aharon Appelfeld, Amos Oz, and A.B. Yehoshua have come to be seen as important figures on the international literary scene of the 70's and 80's; and the evidence of their prose—as well as that of still untranslated writers like Amalia Kahana-Carmon and Yitzhak Ben-Ner—clearly suggests that virtually all desired nuances of thought and feeling, virtually all the minute and peculiar details of external reality, can be caught in the supple meshes of the Hebrew language.

Behind these recent achievements, however, lies a long, uneven, and in some ways quite improbable growth of the language toward maturity as a medium of realistic fiction. When Hebrew literature emerged as a self-consciously modernizing movement in Central Europe more than two centuries ago, it was prose above all that was the technical problem for the new Hebraists. Hebrew, though not a spoken language, had been in continuous use as a literary language for three thousand years. To be sure, during certain periods, literary expression was confined to the religious spheres of liturgy and exegesis; but from the late 10th century C.E. onward there was an unbroken tradition of secular literature as well, stretching from medieval Andalusia to Renaissance and Baroque Italy and Holland. The preponderant genre of this tradition was poetry, sometimes complemented by a wittily ornate form of rhymed narrative prose. More workmanlike varieties of prose served the purposes of philosophic discourse, manuals of devotion, chronicles, rabbinic responsa, travel books, and international business correspondence among Jews.

All this varied activity attests to the vitality of the language, to the fact that many Jews continued to regard it as their national tongue even though they did not speak it. But for the increasing numbers of writers who tried to create prose fiction in Hebrew through the middle and late decades of the 19th century, this hodgepodge of antecedents offered only partial and inadequate solutions to the problems of style, syntax, diction, and vocabulary with which they struggled. They aspired, after all, to achieve in Hebrew what Gogol and Turgenev had achieved in Russian, Balzac in French, Scott and Dickens in English; and how was one to do this in a language nobody spoke, in which it was difficult to discriminate levels of diction and even semantic borders between related terms, in which there was no word for "potato," and "gloves" could be indicated only by the awkward new coinage, "hand-houses"?

Altogether, the story of modern Hebrew literature in Europe is both intriguing in itself and generally instructive about the nature of the language of realism in literature; but, given the paucity of translations of these early modern Hebrew texts and of critical studies in Western languages, it is a story scarcely known outside the circle of readers of Hebrew. This is hardly the place to undertake a concise history of modern Hebrew literature, but it will be helpful to establish some general notion of where this literature came from and what were the circumstances under which, against all odds, it came to flourish.

The newness of modern Hebrew literature has long been a subject of debate among Hebrew literary historians because the supposed emergence of the modern movement in 18th-century Germany was preceded by that eight-centuries-long tradition of secular belletristic writing in Hebrew to which I have alluded. But the new movement that surfaced in Enlightenment Germany was, I think, different in kind from its predecessor because of its fundamentally ideological character. That is to say, by the late 18th century, European Jewry was launching the process of radical historical transformation we call modernization, and what was at issue now in the act of writing Hebrew was not just an aesthetic pursuit but a programmatic renegotia-

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tion of the terms of Jewish collective identity. It is surely not a coincidence that Christian Wilhelm von Dohm brought out his essay, "Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews," in 1781, that Joseph II of Austria issued his Edict of Toleration in 1782, and that the founding journal of the Haskalah, or Hebrew Enlightenment, the quarterly *HaMe'asef*, began publication in Koenigsberg in 1783.

The Haskalah as a coherent movement would last a full century, until the trauma of the pogroms of 1881 made its rationalist meliorism untenable for most Hebrew writers, who then turned to nationalist and neo-romantic literary trends. In its first decades, didactic essays and almost equally didactic poetry predominate, the writers being preoccupied with how to reform Jewish education, Jewish communal politics, Jewish social conditions, Jewish theology. The first instances of prose fiction, which begin to appear around 1820, are lampoons of hasidic obscurantism and so partake of the general reformist impulse.

By this time, the Hebrew movement had moved eastward from its original centers in Berlin and Koenigsberg to Vienna, as the rapid progress of assimilation in Prussia eroded the base of Hebrew readers there. Though Vienna itself may be a "Central" European city, down to World War I its Jewish hinterland, we should remember, was Polish Galicia, also part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Here and elsewhere, Hebrew literature was associated with the great movement of Jewish migration from the small towns, or *shtetlakh*, to the cities that continued through much of the 19th century on into the early decades of the 20th century. (One might recall, as notable instances of the general trend, that Jakob Freud and Hermann Kafka migrated from their native Galician *shtetlakh* to Vienna and Prague respectively, thus making possible the future careers of their illustrious sons.) Soon, there were centers of Haskalah activity in Galicia itself, in Brody, Tarnopol, Lemberg, and Cracow; and by 1840 the new Hebrew literature had also put down roots in Lithuania and in Russia proper, where it was destined to attain its greatest achievements.

As I have noted, prose fiction was long a peripheral genre in the Haskalah: the first Hebrew novel does not appear until 1853, and an artistically mature body of fiction, free of didactic insistence and stylistically adequate to its subjects, does not begin to emerge until the 1880's. The eventual embracing of the novel form may well be another manifestation of the substantive newness of modern Hebrew literature in comparison with earlier phases of secular literature in Hebrew. The novel's generic project of comprehensive realism, of making language effect a kind of sovereign illusion of reality, set it off from earlier genres. To write, let us say, a sonnet or a poetic epigram in Hebrew was an act of competitive cultural imitation, but one carried out within the confines of a highly conventionalized formal structure, and as such chiefly an aesthetic exercise, however deep the feeling behind some of the individual poems. To write a novel in Hebrew, on the other hand, was to constitute a whole world in a language not actually spoken in the real-life equivalent of that world, yet treated by the writer as though it were really spoken, as though a persuasive illusion of reality could be conveyed through a purely literary language. It was, as I shall try to explain, to enter deeply into the mind-set of European culture with a thoroughness not characteristic of premodern Hebrew literature; it was to invent a new secular Hebrew cultural identity as though it were somehow, uncannily, native to the European sphere.

WHO were the people who created this new literature? How did they get a knowledge of the language sufficient to such an undertaking? What were the material conditions in which a literature so anomalous sustained itself? The makers of modern Hebrew literature were, almost without exception, male and the products of an Orthodox upbringing. (In the earlier Haskalah, a good many still preserved some form of enlightened Orthodoxy; later on, the overwhelming majority of the writers were men who had broken decisively with the world of Jewish observance of their childhood.) The gender and the religious background of the writers were determined by the peculiar educational system developed by European Jewry before its entry into modernity; the system, in turn, was associated with the equally peculiar social structure of East European Jewry; and both require a little explanation.

One of the oddest—and most crucial—cultural circumstances of traditional East European Jewry was that its masses, by and large, lived under the conditions of an impoverished peasantry while enjoying almost universal literacy. They were not, of course, a peasantry in being able to work the land: for the most part, they eked out their living as middlemen, petty tradesmen (and often tradeswomen), peddlers, estate managers and tax collectors, publicans, artisans. But a typical *shtetl* house, as one can see from photographs and films taken in Poland as late as the 1920's, would have looked not very different from the makeshift quarters of a black sharecropper in the American South: a one-room shack with dirt floor, without plumbing, crowded by a family with many children, perhaps even with the addition of an old grandparent. One readily understands why Mendele Mokher Seforim, the greatest fictional chronicler of these Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement, should call one of his typical towns Kabtsiel, or Beggarsville.

I have said that these near-paupers and actual paupers were mostly literate, but it was a two-track literacy reflecting a two-track educational

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system. The girls were instructed at home to read the vernacular Yiddish, and since the Hebrew prayerbook was written in the same Hebrew alphabet as Yiddish, they could also, as grown women, in order to fulfill the impulse of piety, "read" the prayers as well, without however understanding more than isolated words and phrases. The boys began *heder*, or elementary school, before the age of five, and were immersed in a curriculum that was entirely limited to the close study of Hebrew and, later, Aramaic texts.

The young boys were led through the Pentateuch verse by verse, each Hebrew phrase being given its Yiddish equivalent in a kind of oral interlinear translation. Other books of the Bible might be accorded some attention when preparation was being made for their public reading at the appointed festivals (Song of Songs at Passover, Ruth at Shavuot, and so forth), and biblical texts fixed in the daily prayers, including dozens of Psalms, would be gotten by heart through sheer force of repeated recitation. But there would be no formal teaching of principles of grammar, no vocabulary lists, no exercises in composition. Indeed, the teen-age students who happened to get hold of a Hebrew grammar treated it pretty much as underground literature, knowing that their rabbinical mentors would regard as an act of subversion any attempt to study the Holy Tongue systematically, with "secular" tools, as though it were a language just like any other.

By the time a boy reached the age of legal induction into Jewish manhood at thirteen, if he was an alert pupil and if his schoolmaster had not been totally incompetent (incompetence being more or less endemic to the system), he could read biblical Hebrew with an approximation of understanding, would have had some introduction to the primary rabbinic text, the Mishnah, and to the main medieval Hebrew commentaries on the Pentateuch, and would have a reasonably adequate understanding of the Hebrew of the prayerbook. In fact, the extreme unevenness of instruction meant that most products of the *heder* were functionally illiterate in Hebrew, retaining only the most rudimentary vocabulary and a fuzzy or mangled understanding of particular texts.

After the age of thirteen, a large part of the student body dropped out, some after a year or more of additional instruction, to become apprentices, to assist in the family business, or otherwise to enter the workforce, and sometimes to be married off by their parents by the time they were fifteen. The more gifted went on to the yeshiva, or talmudic academy, often having to move to a larger town where there was such an institution. The subject of study at the yeshiva was exclusively the Babylonian Talmud, a vast corpus of texts composed in a mélange of Hebrew and its cognate language Aramaic; as always, the language of discussion among students, and between students and teacher, was Yiddish.

The schooldays were long, the demands relentless; students worked over the difficult texts and their commentaries in pairs, and then listened to a general lesson from the yeshiva instructor. The complementary intellectual qualities they were encouraged to develop were a prodigious retention by heart of the talmudic texts and their biblical precedents (*beqi'ut*) and an analytic sharpness accompanied by ingenuity (*harifut*). Most boys left the yeshiva by their late teens, some, having received ordination, to take up rabbinical posts, many, having entered into an arranged marriage, to enjoy a period of private learning subsidized by a prosperous father-in-law who was willing to pay this price in order to have his daughter married to a man of learning.

From the account I have offered, it must surely seem a mystery that anyone could have emerged from this educational system with a sufficient grasp of the Hebrew language to write an essay, a travel book, a sonnet, and, especially, a novel. The yeshiva population was the intellectual elite of Central and East European premodern Jewry. The Hebrew writers produced by the yeshivas were an elite within an elite. In part, I mean simply that they were the equivalent of the A+ students in the system, and certainly the evidence many of them offer of retentive memory and (to a lesser degree) of dialectic subtlety, of *beqi'ut* and *harifut*, is formidable. But I am also referring to a rather special mental aptitude which was not necessarily given special value within the system but which would have abundant uses outside the system—something that the Germans call *Sprachgefühl*, an innate sense, like perfect pitch in music, for how language should properly sound, joined with a relish for the sonorities and the semantic colorations of Hebrew words in their classical idiomatic combinations.

Minds of this almost preternaturally prehensile cast would catch onto every nuanced collocation, every linguistic particle, in a traditional Hebrew text, both those that were part of the curriculum and those that were not. And as a new Hebrew culture began to shimmer before such unusual students as a radical alternative of Jewish identity to that of the Orthodox system, they would, even in the yeshiva milieu, do a good deal of reaching, often surreptitiously, beyond the curriculum—to the parts of the Bible not officially studied, to the medieval philosophers and poets, to those newfangled Hebrew grammars, and, worst of all, to the godless journals, the poetry and fiction, of the new Hebrew literature.

Even a moderately receptive yeshiva student, who had stayed within the confines of the talmudic curriculum, would have been able by the age of eighteen to compose certain limited kinds of Hebrew texts—say, a florid prose letter to a future bride (to be translated to her) made up of

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a pastiche of biblical phrases, or an opinion on a question of talmudic law in a more businesslike rabbinic Hebrew with an admixture of Aramaic. But the elite of the elite, those prehensile minds I have described, having used the system against itself, would be able by the same age to produce in Hebrew a piece of popular science, a critical essay, a long poem in hexameters, a work of fiction. This was not a language anyone was speaking, certainly not in the 19th century, but out of a comprehensive familiarity with the large body of traditional Hebrew texts, biblical and post-biblical, and counting on an audience whose intimate acquaintance with this corpus matched their own, these young men could compose quite freely in Hebrew.

To compose well, making the language address modern predicaments persuasively, was another matter: and it will be worth the effort to try to understand how the trailblazers accomplished that task.

THE class background of the Hebrew writers is elusive. It is sometimes said that they derived chiefly from the merchant class —Ezra Spicehandler, for example, suggests that in the early 19th century the great trade fair at Leipzig was a center of transmission of the German Haskalah to the east through the contacts there between merchants from Prussia and from Polish Galicia. But "merchant" may be a little misleading because in Jewish society it embraced everything from prosperous fur traders and timber dealers to people who maintained wretched little stands in the streets for the sale of odds and ends. The writers came as frequently from the bottom rungs as from the top of the mercantile hierarchy, and so they can scarcely be said to represent an economically privileged class. In a typical poor family, an adolescent son would be expected to help support the household by working full-time. But this was, after all, a society that placed immense value on learning, and in which learning was a means of social ascent; so when a boy showed signs of intellectual gifts by the age of thirteen, great efforts would be made to enable him to continue his studies, poverty notwithstanding. Given the talmudic route to Hebrew literacy, no doubt reinforced by a certain genetic background of intellectual aptitude, it is not surprising that a good many of the Hebrew writers had fathers who were members of the rabbinic intelligentsia—yeshiva instructors or even yeshiva directors, local rabbis, ritual slaughterers (a function that required talmudic learning), independent scholars of Jewish law.

The one social class drastically underrepresented among Hebrew writers was the new Jewish urban proletariat that had formed in the industrializing cities of Central and Eastern Europe by the latter part of the 19th century. Perhaps this is because this class was more rapidly removed from the sources of rabbinic learning than any other in Jewish society. In any case, when members of the Jewish proletariat thought about a programmatic renegotiation of the terms of collective existence, it was typically through socialism, and the language used was the language of the Jewish masses, Yiddish. Although it is true that Yiddish and Hebrew during this period were cognate literatures, and that many of the important writers actually produced work in both languages, it is only Yiddish that evinces a general association with the values and aspirations of the urban proletariat. A surprisingly small proportion of the Hebrew writers were born in the large cities. For the most part, they ended up in the cities, where they sought modern culture, freedom from the restrictions of Orthodox society, and a sustaining coterie of like-minded secularist Hebrew littérateurs. Their writing, however, often concentrated on their native *shtetl* world or, alternatively, on the deracination of the Jewish intellectual displaced from the *shtetl* and struggling to find himself in the anonymity of the modern city.

It is hard to imagine how these men, impelled by the quixotic vision of creating a new secular literature out of a sacred language, managed to sustain themselves, not to speak of how they managed to sustain their common enterprise. Serving as Hebrew tutors to the sons and daughters of affluent Jewish families in the cities was one characteristic means of meager support. Some earned a living as editors, correspondents, even typesetters in whatever existed in the way of Hebrew journalism (more of which in a moment). Although most of them were autodidacts, some managed to obtain university degrees, usually by migrating from Russia, where they were excluded by the *numerus clausus*, to Germany or Switzerland, and a few were able to practice one of the trained professions. By and large, the economic circumstances of Hebrew writers in Europe are an unbroken hard-luck story, and so their sheer persistence in their literary enterprise bears witness to their fierce commitment to the idea of creating a modern literature in Hebrew.

WE DO NOT have precise data on the numerical size of this movement, but it could never have been very large. As I have intimated, the chief defining focus of the Hebrew revival was the literary periodical, from 18th-century Koenigsberg to 20th-century Odessa and Warsaw, and the circulation of most of these would not have exceeded that of a highly specialized American scholarly journal. The pioneer publication, *HaMe'asef*, probably had no more than a thousand or so subscribers at the outset; by the time it was faltering, in 1797, it had only 120 subscribers, and yet it managed to limp on, appearing sporadically, for another twenty-two years, still thought of in Haskalah circles to the east as an important source of ideas and literary models.

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The Hebrew journals were often quarterlies, sometimes monthlies; *HaYom*, the first Hebrew daily, was issued in Petersburg in 1886. Toward the end of the 19th century, *HaTsefirah*, for a while also published as a daily, sold in Russia as many as 15,000 copies per issue.

This was in all likelihood the outer limit for circulation of anything published in Hebrew. The typical journal would have had no more than a couple of thousand subscribers, and most volumes of fiction or poetry would have had printings of the same magnitude, occasionally a little larger, often even smaller. If we add to our calculation the probable circumstance that copies of journals and books would have been shared by several readers, it is still unlikely that most works published in Hebrew in the 19th and early 20th centuries were actually read by more than 10,000 people.

Why, then, would anyone with literary ambitions choose to pursue them under such difficult conditions? And indeed, the writers were not free of moments of despair: a famous case in point is the poem "For Whom Do I Labor?" in which Y.L. Gordon, the major poet of the Russian Haskalah, imagines he is the last of the Hebrew bards as his audience disappears into the vistas of assimilation.

There was, to begin with, a negative reason for the fidelity to Hebrew: most of the writers taught themselves Russian, or German, or Polish in adolescence or after and did not have sufficient mastery of the language of the general culture to write in it. Yiddish, of course, always remained an alternative; but in the minds of many of the writers it was associated with a culture they sought to transcend, a culture which lacked prestige for them. To restate this attitude in positive terms, Yiddish, even when it was felt by writers to have the intimate appeal of a native language rich in colloquial nuance, could not offer a whole set of values that was associated with Hebrew as the classical language of Jewish culture.

Only Hebrew spanned more than three millennia of national experience and had been used by Jews in all the far-flung regions of the Diaspora. Only Hebrew was associated with Jewish political autonomy, and the awareness of this association played a crucial role in Hebrew literature long before, and beyond, the emergence of political Zionism. For if Jews were to create a culture like others, not dominated by a clerical establishment and not defined exclusively in religious terms, the great historical model had been cast in Hebrew on the soil of ancient Palestine. The biblical texts, moreover, in their sublime poetry and their brilliant narratives, had a cachet of literary prestige for which Yiddish could offer no equivalent.

Ultimately, it seems to me that the passionate commitment to Hebrew was impelled in shifting proportions by both aesthetic and historical-ideological motives. On the aesthetic side, Hebrew had always been the most valued language of Jewish culture, if not the most commonly used in everyday life, and had long been the medium of refined literary exercises and epistolary art. With a certain aestheticization of Jewish culture that was a symptom of modernity, this attitude toward the language became for some a kind of addiction to its beauties, even to its sheer formal properties: one relished a well-turned Hebrew phrase, an elegant Hebrew sentence, as elsewhere one might relish Mozart or Cimarosa. The abiding delights of this aesthetic addiction could not be replaced for these writers by any other language, not even by their native tongue.

At the same time, many of the writers had a compelling awareness that this language was not only beautiful but timeless—a consideration usually powerful enough to outweigh whatever anxiety they might have felt about the tininess of their audiences. As S.Y. Agnon, a writer closer to our time but deriving from this Central European milieu before War I, once observed of his own classicizing style: "My language [is] a simple, easy language, the language of all the generations before us and of all the generations to come." Though few Hebrew writers would have stated matters so flatly, in such a provocatively false-naive manner ("a simple, easy language"), Agnon's assertion expresses a fundamental feeling about the historical role of the language that many shared.

In sum, the creators of modern Hebrew literature in Europe were impelled by a sense that the language through which they sought to shape a new Jewish culture had a unique aesthetic dignity and a unique historical resonance. This sense sustained them in the shabbiest material circumstances, when there was barely a readership to address, when the great culture to come was represented here and now only by the handful of literary colleagues with whom they fraternized and with whom they collaborated on the new Hebrew journals and in the publishing houses.

But even the most ardent loyalty to the language as a repository of distinctive values could not conceal the awkwardness and the artificiality of classical Hebrew as a medium for the representation of modern realities, whether social, historical, relational, or psychological. What was needed to make Hebrew transcend these inadequacies was the bold intervention of genius, which would find ways to make the old language answer to a radically new world.

This shaping of an artistically viable realistic Hebrew prose was achieved in two stages. The first stage was effected from the 1880's onward by a single extraordinary writer who was rapidly followed by a whole school of stylistic disciples. The second stage emerged around the turn of the century as a vehement reaction against the first which nevertheless built

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upon it. In order to understand these developments, we need to trace the story of Hebrew prose back to the Haskalah proper.

Although the prose of the Haskalah was by no means consistently biblical, it evinced a pronounced biblicizing tendency, especially in fiction. This meant a renunciation of the other major historical stratum of the language, rabbinic Hebrew (the language of the Midrash, the Mishnah, and the Hebrew elements of the Gemara). Now, rabbinic Hebrew in fact has a much larger and more nuanced vocabulary and a more flexible and precise syntax than biblical Hebrew, but in the minds of the new Hebraists it was the language of the Bible that had the aura of cultural prestige, while rabbinic Hebrew was associated with the narrow learning of *shtetl* and ghetto which they aspired to transcend. Many writers of the Hebrew Enlightenment seem mesmerized by the intrinsic magic of the lofty biblical phrase (*melitsa*, which was also a synonym for poetry itself in their usage but would later come to mean something like "overblown rhetoric"). The prose that was produced out of this aesthetic conviction is often a lifeless pastiche of biblical fragments, and when it attempts contemporary subjects one usually feels a grotesque disparity between the organizing patterns and lexical scope of the prose and the mental and material world of the characters.

In 1862, a twenty-six-year-old writer named Shalom Yakov Abramowitz published a short novel called, in a phrase from Isaiah with a didactic flourish characteristic of the Haskalah, *Learn to Do Well*. Although the writing exhibited a virtuoso's mastery of classical Hebrew, it also suffered conspicuously from the faults of the pastiche style that I just noted. Six years later, he reissued the novel with substantial revisions, now giving it the Turgenevan title, *Fathers and Sons*, but not really solving its artistic problems, as he himself quickly recognized. For he now abandoned Hebrew altogether, and during the next eighteen years, writing in Yiddish a brilliant series of satirical novels about Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement through an invented narrative persona, Mendele Mokher Seforim, Mendele the Bookseller, he became the acknowledged "grandfather" of the Yiddish novel. When he returned to Hebrew composition in 1886, producing new stories and reworking his Yiddish novels into Hebrew, he had arrived at a point where he could give Hebrew much of the pungency, the liveliness, the suppleness of the Yiddish he had been writing.

The two chief stylistic moves that enabled Mendele to achieve this unlikely feat were a switch to rabbinic Hebrew and a radically new use of allusions to classical Hebrew texts. In fact, his compendious prose incorporated virtually all the historical strata of the language—biblical, rabbinic, liturgic, medieval-philosophic, devotional, hasidic—but everything was contained within a normative framework of rabbinic idiom, grammar, and syntax. This general adherence to the language of the early rabbis produced a sense of stylistic homogeneity, despite the inclusion of heterogeneous elements. Even more important, rabbinic syntax with its abundant possibilities of subordination made available a new precision in the definition of causal relations, just as its system of verb tenses offered a new complexity in the representation of temporal relations. And from the rabbinic sources, teeming as they are with references to the minutiae of everyday experience, Mendele culled a rich vocabulary with which it became possible to offer vivid depictions of everything from a broken-down horse pulling a wagon and a beggar in rags to a man patiently filling his pipe, lighting it with a glowing coal held in tongs, puffing it up, relaxing into the pleasure of a leisurely smoke.

At the same time, the profuse allusions to both biblical and post-biblical texts, intended of course for the delectation of an audience scarcely less learned than the writer himself, were transformed from inert fragments of a pastiche into satiric flashpoints, repeatedly illuminating the discrepancy, or the wryly ironic congruence, between classical model and modern reality. An 1890 story, for example, called "Shem and Japheth on the Train," begins with a description of an unruly mob of ragtag Jews trying to conduct trade as they crowd into the third-class compartments. On the surface, the prose seems Dickensian or Gogolian, but it is also reverberant with echoes from the Exodus story and the story of the Golden Calf, suggesting expulsion, without the dignity of liberation, as a recurrent historical fate of the Jewish people and the fixation on gold as an immemorial national propensity.

The major Hebrew poet, H.N. Bialik, a self-avowed disciple of Mendele in his own prose style, nicely summarized the master's achievement by calling him, in an essay written in 1910, "the creator of the *nusakh*." A *nusakh* is a traditional musical mode for chanting prayers in public worship. Anyone with a musical ear can learn a *nusakh*; once you know it, you can intone any set of words from the service and so act as prayer leader. Its three most prominent features are transmissibility (Bialik stresses that the *nusakh* is a collective possession), adaptability to new circumstances (any text can be sung to it), and its status as clarified form, exhibiting a modal unity. In regard to the last of these three traits, it should be observed that Mendele's prose evinces not only a stylistic consistency in adhering to rabbinic norms but a fondness for symmetries and balance, a predisposition to arrange strings of overlapping or nearly synonymous terms in nicely ordered pairs and triplets (Bialik notes the "solidity" of Mendele's style).

There was a powerful allure in the traditionalism and the internal harmony of this prose: for an approximate English equivalent, one would have

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to go back to the 18th century, to Johnson or Fielding. Within a decade of Mendele's return to Hebrew, dozens of writers were turning out *nusakh* prose. The last, and most extravagant, practitioner of the *nusakh*, Haim Hazaz, died as recently as 1973, and the influence of the tradition has been so pervasive that one still encounters little turns of phrase that hark back to the *nusakh* in Hebrew journalism today and, perhaps more frequently, in a certain style of Israeli political rhetoric.

But by the beginning of the 20th century, a number of young writers had come to feel that Mendele's stylistic synthesis was a solution that did not respond to the imperative of realism as they perceived it. There was, of course, a certain tonal fit between the Jews of the Pale who inhabited Mendele's stories and novels and the Hebrew in which they were represented, for at least the males among them were, after all, study-house Jews or Jews who had rubbed against the world of the *heder* and study-house, however imperfect their actual learning. Their very ne'er-do-well woolgathering drew on the idiom of the rabbinic texts, so the Hebrew Mendele uses for them is, paradoxically, flesh of their flesh, bone of their spiritual bone, even as we remember that their real-life counterparts would in fact have been speaking and dreaming and counting in Yiddish. Many of the younger Hebrew writers, however, like M.Y. Berdichevsky, Y.H. Brenner, U.N. Gnessin, were interested in representing deracinated Jewish intellectuals in urban settings, and for such figures the language of the *nusakh* belonged to a world of values and concerns which the characters had put behind them. And the writers were not content to refer to modern experience largely through the indirection of ironic allusion, in the manner of Mendele.

There were still more substantive problems with Mendele's prose. Its classicizing balance did not accord with the new writers' interest in representing what was discordant, fragmentary, contradictory, ambiguous, and confused in human relations and inner experience. In fact, Mendele offered a model of prose as splendidly wrought artifact, whereas the new writers were variously concerned instead with evoking *process* in their writing. And as an extension of this last contrast, the *nusakh* style provides a sharp external view of the characters but does not lend itself very readily to the rendering of the characters' inwardness, to techniques like *style indirect libre* and interior monologue. By the first decade of our century, many Hebrew writers, like their English, French, German, and Russian contemporaries, were above all drawn to the fluctuating movements of consciousness as the proper arena for the enactment of serious fiction.

How could Hebrew, still without a vernacular base, be made the medium for a realism that was experiential and not social, as it had been for Mendele? To begin with, it was necessary to write what a purist would no doubt regard as bad Hebrew. I say bad in order to emphasize the energy of opposition or avoidance in this new writing. The symmetries and harmonies of the *nusakh* had to be shattered in order to achieve a closer approach to the kinetic reality of consciousness. The elegance of perfectly attuned classical Hebrew idioms had to be abandoned and in many instances actually replaced by what amounted to a Hebrew translation of European idioms, for it was the latter that more faithfully represented the unvoiced inner speech of the Europeanized characters.

If one tries to think about the Western novel in generic overview, there are of course striking stylistic differences among writers as well as notable shifts from one generation of writers to the next, but there is also a kind of loose consensus of stylistic predilections—say, from Stendhal to Flaubert to Tolstoy to Conrad and Mann—which one might call, with a necessary tincture of ironic qualification, Standard Novelistic. This consensus would include the sense of narration, from larger units down to sentence structure, as slow cumulative process; a fondness for analytic discriminations and proliferating qualifications, for lists and the endlessly additive assemblage of details; a flexible, constantly mobile use of narrative stance, shuttling back and forth among authorial commentary, report of scene and action, quoted monologue, third-person rendering of unspoken inner speech, summary of thought and feeling.

The anti-*nusakh* writers of the early 1900's, whether they had specific European models in mind or not (Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and lesser Russian and German writers were variously sources of partial inspiration), were essentially trying to make Hebrew work as a dialect of Standard Novelistic. With regard to the history of the Hebrew language, then, it is instructive to note that the process of Europeanization that many linguists have observed in Israeli Hebrew actually began in the composition of fiction a good quarter-century before Hebrew was fully revived as a spoken language. This revolutionary change at times results in grating effects, especially in the prose of Brenner and Berdichevsky, but the rapid success of the undertaking is quite remarkable.

A full demonstration of this success would require lengthy quotation and analysis, but let me offer just a small fragment of a sentence from Gnessin—he is a writer who tends toward paragraph-long sentences—as an illustration of the new orientation toward style in early Hebrew modernism. The protagonist of his 1906 novella *To the Side* is, like the central figure of many a modernist fiction elsewhere, a man without much vocation for living—neurasthenic, sexually insecure and self-subverting, dreaming of professional achievement and private consummation without

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the will to effect them. Here is the report of a characteristic moment in his chronic condition of quiet desperation:

> . . . and the heart felt as though some thin crust were peeling off within it, and that thin crust were peeling and splitting and separating into bubbles, and these were sliding, sliding out and pressing against the chest and bursting into the throat.

The unpleasant but effective simile of the bursting crust and the sliding bubbles is not dictated by any conventional literary decorum or by a traditional association of idioms but rather by the desire to be faithful to the kinesthetic reality of the represented experience. The overlapping, additive movement of the syntax does not reflect any established rhetorical norm of sentence structure but rather the commitment to the verbal intimation of process of which I have spoken.

In precisely this regard, Gnessin actually shifts the center of gravity of the system of Hebrew verb tenses. Instead of simple past (Hebrew: *pa'al*) he repeatedly prefers either an iterative past or, as here, a progressive past (in Hebrew, both have the same form, *hayah po'el*). The effect is as momentous as that of the analogous shift Erich Auerbach observed long ago in Flaubert's French from *passé simple* to *imparfait*: instead of a world of clearly demarcated events following one another in steady sequence, things happen habitually, over and over, the units of time blurring together; or, alternately, there is a movement of minutely calibrated process in a kind of experiential slow motion, as in the figurative language here we edge through the progressive verbs from peeling to splitting to separating, sliding, pressing, and finally bursting.

Gnessin, who died of tuberculosis in 1913 at the age of thirty-two, leaving behind only a small handful of remarkable short fictions, achieved the most subtle and complex effects of any of the creators of modernist prose in Hebrew. It took more than half a century before Hebrew criticism began to appreciate the extent of his originality, though he had a few stylistic heirs in the next generation of Hebrew writers. One was Simon Halkin, who wrote in this country two densely lyric novels about American Jews before he emigrated to Israel in the late 1940's; another was David Fogel, like Halkin also a prominent poet, who produced some extraordinary fiction, thoroughly European in character, concerned with the psychological convolutions of erotic life, while he was living in Paris in the 20's and 30's. (He was to perish in a Nazi death camp.)

IN ADDITION to its stylistically iconoclastic impulse, the modernist movement in Hebrew exhibits through the early decades of the century the most impressive growth of precision in the nuanced use of terms. In part, this is a consequence of creating a consensus through repeated literary usage on the precise semantic range of classical Hebrew terms. But Mendele's mining of the lexical wealth offered by rabbinic and post-rabbinic sources was also crucial for the very writers who rebelled against his model of indigenously Hebrew prose artifact. For these sources offered writers of fiction the vocabulary to describe the streaks of the lily, the beads of moisture on the grimy windowpane, the wart on the bulbous nose, and even the various modes of consciousness and inner states of being.

Thus, a single passage in a novella by David Fogel representing a woman's disturbed state of arousal in the presence of a sexually overpowering man uses *yeshut*, a medieval philosophic term that means in context "inward self"; *da'at*, "mind," a biblical and rabbinic term; *havayah*, "essential being," a rabbinic word originally meaning "that which is"; and soon after we encounter *hakarah*, "consciousness," a new acceptation, under the pressure of analogous European usages, for a rabbinic term that indicates recognition or knowing. Very little of this literary vocabulary, which has been inherited by contemporary Israeli writers, consists of loan-words, a fact that makes the acquisition of literary Hebrew to this day a difficult task for anyone who has not grown up with the language.

The precedent of the *nusakh* was important for the anti-*nusakh* writers in other ways as well. Although their own prose, for the reasons I have offered, no longer paraded ostentatiously in the bookish finery of rabbinic learning, juggling sources as it went, they followed Mendele in fixing rabbinic syntax and grammar as the prevailing norm, a formal decision which made possible the kind of suppleness of statement and complication of temporality and relation they sought. The model of rabbinic Hebrew, moreover, opened an avenue to vernacular vitality in a language nobody as yet spoke.

Mendele as a composer of Yiddish prose had exploited the vernacular vividness of the actual folk language. When he came back to Hebrew, still using a narrator who was a kind of oral performer, he needed to create some Hebrew equivalent for the liveliness of the spoken word. The rabbinic texts on which he now drew made a crucial difference in this regard because they are filled with living voices. The Mishnah is a written compilation of what was initially an oral study of the Law, and it retains in the very cadences and turns of speech of its questions and responses and conclusions abundant traces of its oral origins. The midrashim had a prehistory as actual sermons, and in their homey diction and their lively imagery they often strive toward a literary recreation of the living immediacy of the preacher addressing his congregation. Thus the rabbinic classics possess what could be called a vernacular-like character, for all their manifest status as literary texts. Mendele turned this vernacular-like character to artistic account

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in creating a credible theatrical voice for his itinerant bookseller-narrator who reports on life in the Pale. A generation later, Gnessin tapped the more subdued and reflective elements of speech in rabbinic Hebrew to evoke persuasively the rhythms of inner speech of characters who would actually have been thinking in Russian or Yiddish.

CONVENTIONAL wisdom associates the rise of the novel elsewhere with a bold new embrace of the vernacular in narrative prose. It is a formula that in England has always worked well enough for Defoe and Richardson, but only marginally for Sterne and not at all for Fielding. Reading European and American novelistic prose in the light of the seemingly anomalous example of Hebrew, one notices more readily that the language of realism is only rarely a performance of the vernacular but is typically a complex system of *equivalences* for the vernacular that includes only local citation of and oblique allusion to actual spoken usage. Indeed, it is by no means a simple or natural operation to appropriate the vernacular for literary purposes, as the example of the 19th-century American novel before Mark Twain will suggest. The mediation of literary models to show how the vernacular can be used is usually indispensable.

In Hebrew, the first generation since ancient times of writers who were native speakers of the language became active in the 1940's (the so-called Palmach Generation). One might have thought that their prose would exhibit a new colloquial naturalness; but as the Israeli critic Gershon Shaked has persuasively demonstrated, Palmach Generation writing tends to be self-consciously "literary" in the pejorative sense, abounding in mannered locutions, rhetorical insistences, and replications of the clichés of European and American prose. It is only with more recent writers like Shabtai, Ben-Ner, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, and the later Yehoshua that Hebrew prose attains the subtlety and suppleness it reached by the early decades of this century among its best practitioners in European centers like Odessa, Vilna, Vienna, Berlin, and Paris. And most instructively, the prose of the finest contemporaries begins to sound more like that of the anti-*nusakh* current at the turn of the century than of their immediate predecessors in Israeli fiction.

This strange episode in literary history leads one to ponder the relation between language and national consciousness, on the one hand, and language and the representation of reality, on the other. By all rights, Hebrew on the threshold of the modern era should have been a dead language, or at any rate a purely academic or clerical one. The quixotic effort, improbably crowned with success, to create an "as-if" Hebrew world in fiction on European soil demonstrates that at least for this intellectual elite the Hebrew of the classical texts presented not a fossilized past but a crystallized living reality. The language potently persisted in their minds as the timeless, distinctive, and authoritative language of the Jewish people, and so it could become the solid basis of a new collective existence, of a cogent cultural nationalism, before Zionism was conceived.

The general principle of literary expression manifested in their enterprise is that literary realism is by no means dependent on a transcription of living speech but, on the contrary, always needs the stylistic norms and conventions of antecedent literature in order to achieve its compelling approximations of immediate experience. The success of the early modern Hebrew writers, working without a vernacular base, reveals something of how written language, in all its powerful internal cohesiveness as a formal system evolving through time and accumulating historical associations, may be deployed to evoke the feel and weight and complexity of the real world.

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The New Welfare Debate

Lawrence M. Mead

WELFARE REFORM, one of the hardy perennials of American politics, has been revived in Washington. Since President Reagan announced his intention to reform welfare two years ago, proposals have come from all sides, and bills are now pending in Congress. But the politics of welfare has altered: where in the past controversy centered on the issue of expanded benefits, today debate has shifted mostly to "workfare"—i.e., proposals requiring that adult welfare recipients work or otherwise better themselves in return for support.

Today, as formerly, the main object of reform is Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the program that supports poor single mothers and their children, using both federal and state funds. There are other important federal welfare programs, such as Medicaid and Food Stamps, which finance health care and food for the poor, yet AFDC is the focus because dependency on this program seems the most intractable. In fact, what is now known as the "welfare crisis" goes back to the late 1960's and the early 1970's, when the AFDC rolls more than doubled, from around five million to over eleven million people, a level that has since changed little.

In those years, AFDC became entangled with the issues of race and the inner city. Growing welfarism coincided with other signs of urban disarray—a rising incidence of female-headed families, illegitimacy, joblessness, troubled schools, and crime. Just when formalized racial discrimination was fading away, thanks to civil-rights reforms, the growing welfare class raised the specter of unresolvable racial inequality.

Did welfare *cause* urban disarray? AFDC originally covered only single-parent, not two-parent, families, on the argument that the father, if present, should be supporting the family. This restriction seemed to generate an incentive for fathers to abandon their families in order to qualify them for aid. To some observers it also seemed that one reason work effort was low on welfare was that anything a welfare mother earned would be deducted from her grant.

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To liberal reformers, these problems could be cured by changing the incentives in welfare. In order to reduce family breakup, coverage should be extended to two-parent as well as single-parent families. To promote employment, recipients should be given an incentive to work by being allowed to keep at least part of their earnings. On such reasoning, Congress in 1961 allowed (but did not require) states to cover two-parent families in AFDC, provided the father was unemployed, and in 1967 it instituted a mild work incentive. Both features were included in the comprehensive reform schemes proposed by Presidents Nixon and Carter. Along with other proposals, these plans would have guaranteed an income to all Americans.

Unfortunately, however, liberal reforms did nothing to reduce dependency. Covering intact families did not stem the tide of illegitimacy in the ghetto, nor did work incentives raise work levels. Instead, the new rules themselves became a factor in the welfare boom, as they made eligible for aid many families who previously had incomes too high for welfare. Partly on these grounds, many in government eventually lost patience with liberal reform; the Nixon and Carter plans were both defeated in Congress.

Since the mid 1970's a more conservative brand of welfare reform has taken hold. This approach regards the abuses in welfare as moral problems, not just as technicalities, and it applies to them stronger medicine than incentives. In the last ten years, Congress has become much tougher about requiring state AFDC programs to reduce waste and fraud, and to make fathers who abandon families help pay the cost of supporting them. In 1981, the Reagan administration cut eligibility for AFDC and revoked most of the work incentives granted in 1967. Also in 1981, Congress allowed states to experiment more widely with work programs of their own; for the first time workfare was permitted—requiring the employable to "work off" their AFDC grants in unpaid jobs in local government agencies.

Since then, new work programs have proliferated at the state and local level, although the definition of workfare has expanded to include not just working off grants but education or training for work as well. Evaluations have made the new

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programs look reasonably successful. They seem to raise earnings and reduce dependency somewhat, and at little or no net cost to the government since the expense of the new services is defrayed by savings in welfare as recipients go to work.

The current reform debate in Washington is mostly about how *federal* policy-makers should respond. The main proposals are to spend more on child care and training services in work programs, and to institute more definite requirements that employable clients participate in these programs. Essentially, the first has become the liberal, the second the conservative, meaning of welfare reform.

THERE are, to be sure, still those on the Left who attribute the vogue for workfare to the turning of the political climate: the nation, they say, is simply more conservative—i.e., stingy—than in the age of liberal reform plans. But that is a superficial explanation. The fact is that research has made the welfare problem look much tougher than it once did. Experts, even liberals, no longer believe that merely offering new benefits to the dependent can overcome their problems.

The earlier reform plans were promoted on the supposition that welfare recipients and poor people were not very different from other Americans. It was claimed that few were dependent or poor for long, and that the adults among them worked at levels fairly typical of the population at large. Nonwork could be attributed to high unemployment rates or other economic troubles.

Recent research confirms, however, what casual observation always suggested, that there is a long-term welfare class. About half of AFDC cases stay on the rolls more than two years, 38 percent for five years or longer. Moreover, a much lower proportion work today than did a generation ago. The "working poor," beloved of liberal reformers, have largely been lifted above the poverty line by economic growth. Of poor adults heading families in 1984, only 17 percent worked full-time, while 51 percent did not work at all; in 1959, both figures were about a third. Today, only about 5 percent of AFDC mothers—as compared with well over half of divorced or separated women in the population at large—work at a given time. Many single men who father welfare children also work erratically at best.

The trends are adverse even though the chance to work seems widely available. The argument that lack of jobs or other "barriers" prevent the poor from working is no longer credible. The nation has become heavily dependent on illegal immigrants to do "dirty" jobs that poor Americans decline. In most areas, jobs are plentiful, at least at low wages, and in the last two decades mothers have flooded to take them, despite low skills and the difficulties of securing child care. As the success of many recent Asian immigrants proves, the economic opportunities in this society are great, even for the unskilled. In failing to respond to these chances, welfare mothers and poor men are distinctly out of step.

In addition, experience and research have undercut the liberal hope that government can raise work levels by measures short of requirements. A succession of training and public-employment programs, virtually all voluntary, poured forth from Washington during the 1960's and 1970's. But, as with work incentives, none of them caused disadvantaged or dependent adults to work more consistently in the low-skilled jobs they could already get in the private sector, with or without the programs. Clients might accept the benefits eagerly, but this did not mean they worked more steadily thereafter.

The reason for low work effort is seldom that the poor lack opportunities, nor is it that they do not want to work in principle. While some reject low-paid work as too menial, more simply lack confidence. They hope to work, but they do not feel they can succeed at it. Nor, under current policy, do they usually have to try.

Lacking confidence, the seriously poor do not respond to economic incentives in the "rational" way that liberal reformers presumed. How, then, to overcome their *passivity*? That is the great question in antipoverty policy today. Increasingly, the solution seems to lie with public authority. To the extent that the new work programs are successful, it is probably because they make more employable recipients take work seriously than did any predecessor programs. Just as Americans accept the duty to pay taxes, yet need the IRS to remind them, so many poor adults need to have their aspiration to work reinforced by obligation.

A number of books have appeared on the welfare problem recently, but they hardly reflect an adequate grasp of these realities. Most of the authors, whether on the Left or the Right, treat the long-term poor abstractly, and few offer practical policies for raising work levels.

SUCH proclivities are most evident among hard-line radicals, those most disposed to blame poverty and dependency on "society." Fred Block, Richard A. Cloward, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Frances Fox Piven, in *The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State*,* shed little light on the welfare problem, but their book helps explain why the Left has lost much of the influence on social policy it once had.

Piven and Cloward are well known for their radical interpretation of welfare. In *Regulating the Poor* and other works, they have contended that the purpose of welfare is not the promotion of a common humanity but appeasing unrest and regulating the labor supply according to the needs of the business cycle. Allegedly, welfare supports

* Pantheon, 205 pp., $16.95.

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poor adults when there are no jobs for them, then withdraws aid when business needs them to perform menial labor. The current book concedes that benefit programs inevitably reduce work effort among the poor, but the authors see this as a plus, for it strengthens the "bargaining position of working people" against business. Rather than having to do just any "dirty" work offered to them, they can hold out for jobs with decent pay, and for conditions compatible with child-care responsibilities.

Cloward was one of the thinkers behind the original antipoverty program of the 1960's, which emphasized the claims rather than the responsibilities of the poor. He and Piven have also asserted that gains in social policy come not when the poor organize as an interest group but when they threaten the system with disorder. This theory did much to inspire the welfare-rights movement of the later 1960's, which mobilized militant welfare mothers to demand extra benefits.

As other historians have recognized, the Piven-Cloward interpretation is a caricature of the motives, often well-meaning, that have inspired American welfare policy. But in the 1960's and 1970's it was widely believed. It did much to make federal social planners feel guilty about the past. It entrenched the view that welfare should be an entitlement, the giving of benefits without asking anything in return. Like an angel with a flaming sword, that conviction prevented federal policymakers from even discussing the behavioral problems that plagued the ghetto.

Since the late 1970's, however, the atmosphere has been transformed. When Ronald Reagan cut welfare and many other social programs, hardly a dog barked. Welfare recipients were quiescent, as was organized labor, which had mobilized effectively for the social reforms of the 1930's and 1960's. Even the wholesale loss of unionized factory jobs to foreign competition has not provoked anything like the mass movement of the poor and unemployed that Piven and Cloward say must be the basis for social change.

The tone of *The Mean Season*, accordingly, is defensive, bemoaning the cuts but helpless to do much about them. The authors ridicule Charles Murray and other conservative theorists who have provided the arguments for the Reagan assault, but they admit that they have lost the intellectual initiative to the Right. The same defeatism is evident in other recent tracts from the Left, such as *The New American Poverty* (1984) by Michael Harrington, another progenitor of the War on Poverty, and Michael Katz's *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse* (1986).

WHY is no one listening to the Left any more? The reason has to do with more than the shifting of the political winds. The best-known radicals in social policy have also lost authority because they are no longer doing much research. Harrington's book is an essay written about other people's research; *The Mean Season* is much the same.* These authors have collected no fresh data about the welfare problem, and in an age when most social-policy analysis is highly quantitative, that is disqualifying. A purely literary Left can no longer claim the influence it once did on issues of social policy.

But the fundamental problem with the Left's analysis is that it is no longer persuasive. These authors write out of a progressive tradition, stretching back to the origins of democratic politics, that interprets social reform as a mass struggle for equality, in which "the people," defined ever more broadly, organize to demand greater social standing from the rich and powerful. "The people" want to get ahead on their own, but also and above all they want government to protect them from the marketplace. They want "free" services, such as education and health, regulation of wages and working conditions, and welfare, pensions, and other benefits for those who cannot support themselves.

In any democratic society, that is a compelling vision. But unfortunately the last reforms that could be called progressive in this sense were the civil-rights acts of the 1960's. The last major social program serving a broad public was Medicare, which finances health care for the aged, enacted in 1965. Since then, federal social programming has been driven by concern for less inclusive groups, especially disadvantaged minorities and the underclass. These groups may be needy, but they are too disordered to demand change on their own behalf. It has been provided for them, but largely at the behest of government planners, not in response to pressure from below. And when Reagan cut these programs, he did so mainly because they were ineffective, not, as *The Mean Season* suggests, as part of some generalized offensive by business against "the people."

The authors of *The Mean Season* hark back to a vanished society in which the underdogs were personally competent, yet lacked opportunity. They complain that current opponents of welfare do not give enough credit to "the efforts of the unemployed" in the 1930's and of the "black protesters" of the 1960's. To cast our current social problem in such terms is nostalgic. Today's long-term poor and dependent seldom make such "efforts," nor do they display the discipline of the civil-rights marchers. They are seldom "working people" forced to rely on welfare as a form of temporary unemployment insurance until the right job comes along; in fact, they rarely work consistently at all. Mass-based reform is possible on behalf of the competent poor, but not on behalf of

* Piven and Cloward, in the chapters written by them, crib numbers and studies from my own *Beyond Entitlement* and other secondary sources. Fred Block's chapter on economic policy is the only one that seems based on the author's own studies.

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the passive poor, who do little to help themselves.

One might suppose that radical authors would support firm measures to transform inert recipients of welfare into workers who would have more capacity to press for change. But *The Mean Season* opposes workfare as just another conservative device to restrict access to aid. The authors are no longer pursuing the Left's traditional goal of equality. They are simply rationalizing dependency.

A glimmer of positive thinking occurs only in Barbara Ehrenreich's chapter, which challenges radicals to offer an "alternative vision" to conservatism, one based on the "republican values of active citizenship." But what could such citizenship mean if it does not, first of all, expect the dependent to do more to help themselves? Those who merely make demands on others are not fully citizens. In eschewing that conclusion, *The Mean Season* offers no solutions to the social problem, and expresses a radicalism no longer worthy of the name.

The more effective spokesmen for today's Left do their own research, and they focus precisely on the employment issue that has become the Achilles heel of traditional reformism. How can one argue for an expanded government when many of its beneficiaries, even if employable, no longer work?

The trick is to show in some manner that they cannot work, despite what seems like plentiful opportunity. One contention is that work effort has declined due to the "deindustrialization of America." Thus, according to Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, the economy no longer produces as many well-paying jobs as it once did. Employment may be growing, but, allowing for inflation, most of the jobs are low-paid by the standards of the 1960's and early 1970's. Unskilled young workers who used to be able to get decent jobs in manufacturing today can only flip hamburgers at McDonald's. This reflects the destruction of unionized factory jobs by imports, a tougher stance by business and government toward unions, and faltering productivity.

The case is overstated. Wages were only recently depressed (mainly by the recession of the early 1980's), and what auto and steel workers used to earn cannot be a realistic norm for today's economy. Moreover, even if the wage depression were permanent, it could not explain why the poor and dependent fail to work. To the contrary, in the face of lower wages one might expect people to work *more* rather than less, in order to maintain their incomes. That is just what most Americans did during the 1970's as incomes failed to keep pace with inflation: many husbands worked longer hours and innumerable wives took jobs for the first time. Only among the poor and needy did work effort fail to rise.

Low wages cause difficulty for middle- and working-class Americans, but they seldom cause poverty or dependency by themselves. Even at the minimum wage, only a fifth of workers are poor, because typically they are young and can count on earnings from other family members. Despite low wages, a single mother can usually avoid welfare if she works. Only 7 percent of such mothers working full-time are on welfare, compared with two-thirds of those who do not work at all.

If the poor typically were working, they could be hurt by low wages, and their poverty would then take the worthy form it did in the 1930's and before—of parents laboring but unable to support their families. Because today's poor work so much less, the wage problem is largely beside the point. It might explain rising inequality among those who *are* working, but not why we have a nonworking underclass.

It is true that some people, poor and nonpoor, decline to work because of poor wages or working conditions. Some liberal analysts suggest that failure to find a "good" job is as valid a reason not to work as inability to find any job at all. They believe it is government's responsibility to assure a "good" job even to the least-skilled worker. But the public clearly disagrees. Polls suggest that most Americans regard refusal to work as a form of private judgment akin to breaking the law, a rejection of the established terms of membership in this society.

This is not to say that the poor must accept any jobs the market offers. Job standards are a political question, and government legitimately sets a minimum wage and regulates working conditions. The point is only that "good" jobs cannot be guaranteed just for the poor, if only out of fairness to the many other workers who do "dirty" jobs every day. If the minimum wage and other standards are to be raised for the poor, they must be raised for all workers. And, as the experience of the 1930's proves, higher standards can be effectively demanded only by those who have a work history under the old standards, not by those who seldom work at all.

Critics of the labor market also contend that, even if jobs exist, there is a "mismatch" between them and the location or skills of the poor. John Kasarda has shown that much employment opportunity has migrated to the Sunbelt or overseas from the Eastern and Midwestern cities where most poor and dependent people live. Jobs have left the inner city for the suburbs, where urban job-seekers find it difficult to follow because of inadequate public transportation and costly housing. The shifts have been greatest among manufacturing employers whose jobs—manual but well-paid—once offered the best opportunity to the low-skilled. Of course, a "high-tech" economy based on finance, information, and computing has grown up in many of the areas abandoned by manufacturing, but its jobs require more education than most poor adults have.

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In his much-noted *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*,* William Julius Wilson argues that such shifts go far to explain the extraordinary dysfunction of today's inner city. The decline in the manufacturing economy, he writes, means that unskilled black men can no longer get good jobs, which means they cannot support families. That in turn causes black women to go on welfare rather than marry, and from this fracture of the family the disorders of the ghetto follow.

The thesis is imaginative. It makes a connection between America's two most serious social problems—the declining factory and the inner city. But as we have seen, the atrophy of well-paid jobs properly explains falling incomes among working people, not the failure of so many poor adults to work at all. Even low-paying jobs suffice to keep the vast majority of families out of poverty if both parents work. To account for nonwork, Wilson would have to show that *no* jobs exist for the inner-city poor. He does not claim this, nor would it be plausible to do so when the labor market is already so tight, and so dependent on foreign labor for "dirty" jobs.

Research has undercut the argument that jobs are inaccessible to the poor because of distance or skill requirements. It turns out that blacks work at much lower levels than whites and Hispanics even when they face the same commuting distances. Nor has the share of jobs available to the low-skilled declined very much since the advent of "high-tech." The problem for poor blacks is that they commonly fail to acquire even elementary literacy and work discipline in school, and seldom work consistently even in available jobs. Many would be unemployable even in a manufacturing economy.

But if Wilson's economic theory is unconvincing, he is at least brutally realistic in describing the ghetto. Where most discourse about welfare concentrates on women, he correctly calls attention to the plight of poor men. He does not hesitate to call the entrenched poor an "underclass." He describes bluntly how crime and illegitimacy have escalated in the inner city. He calls liberals squeamish for refusing to admit such problems. As a black himself, Wilson may enjoy unusual freedom to be honest, but his candor is still courageous.

Wilson also stipulates that racial discrimination has sharply declined, and should not be invoked as a present cause of poverty. In fact, fairer opportunity has in some ways worsened the situation, for it has allowed better-off blacks, who used to uphold social mores in the ghetto, to depart for the suburbs. Deprived of their influence and resources, the remaining poor have succumbed more readily to their worst impulses.

No one has put the predicament of the ghetto more starkly. Unfortunately, Wilson's realism fails at the point of policy. One would expect him to endorse authoritative measures to restore order and effort to the ghetto, particularly law enforcement and workfare. But because of his belief in economic causes, his recommendations reduce to conventional collectivism. He would downplay remedies aimed specifically at minorities, such as affirmative action, as they favor better-off blacks over the poor. Instead, he would expand welfare and other benefits aimed at broad publics. Above all, he would use economic planning, to assure a "tight labor market," and society-wide bargaining, as in European corporatist economies, to balance social and economic priorities in national policy.

But again, the labor market is already tight. Collectivist measures, although they might help working people, will not avail those who fail to work. Even someone so hardheaded as Wilson finally acquiesces in the orthodoxy among liberal analysts, which is to assign all the responsibility for social problems to society itself, none to the poor. From such reasonings, government derives a mandate only to manipulate surrounding conditions, but not to govern the poor themselves so as to enforce civility.

We turn finally to recent conservative writings on welfare. Where liberals and leftists usually want to expand what government does for the poor, especially at the federal level, conservatives usually want to restrict it. The reason is that they blame poverty not on society, but on government itself.

But there is more resemblance between the two camps than one might think. As observers from Tocqueville to Louis Hartz have noticed, even the Right in America is liberal, at least in the sense that it believes in a society of free and energetic individuals who have little need for public authority. In the name of that vision, conservatives no less than liberals have tended to evade the dilemma posed by the dysfunction of today's poor.

A number of recent writings, however, show progress toward a comprehensive conservative social policy. Most earlier conservative analysts cared little about social policy and much more about economics and defense; those who did care asked mainly if the welfare state was good for the economy, not whether it was good for the poor. In his pathbreaking *Losing Ground*, published in 1984, Charles Murray set aside economic issues and accepted the liberal criterion for judging social policy—whether it reduced poverty. He found that, to the contrary, it increased poverty. The culprit was the welfare system itself, which tempted the poor to avoid marriage and work in favor of dependency. To resolve the problem, Murray wrote, the "rules of the game" had to be changed. Government should spend more on education but abolish welfare for the working-aged, and end all preferences for minorities. Only then would the economic

* University of Chicago Press, 254 pp., $19.95.

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prospects facing the poor be such as to favor marriage and work. Less government would mean less poverty.

Murray is all too close to someone like William Julius Wilson in his understanding of the social problem. Murray's poor are imprisoned by government, just as Wilson's are by the economy. Murray wants less government, where Wilson wants more, but both assume the poor will respond constructively if conditions are changed. As we have noted, however, the behavior of the seriously poor does not seem economic in the first place. The distressing ways of their lives, especially illegitimacy and crime, do not serve their own interests, let alone society's. It is doubtful that even abolishing welfare, as Murray wants, would transform them into dutiful citizens.

Government cannot merely offer "freedom" to the poor; it must do something to ensure that they will do more to help themselves. One might think that conservatives, sensitive to the moral issues raised by welfare, would be more open than liberals to such a prospect. To entertain it, however, they would have to get over their hereditary suspicion of government. They would need a properly conservative doctrine of the uses of power.

THE beginning of such a doctrine can be glimpsed in *Out of the Poverty Trap: A Conservative Strategy for Welfare Reform*, by Stuart Butler and Anna Kondratas.* This is undoubtedly the most sophisticated conservative study of social administration yet to appear. The authors are fierce critics of established policy, but unlike Murray they accept the need for national antipoverty programs, including welfare. And where Murray treats the poor mainly as economic actors and gives limited attention to moral issues, Butler and Kondratas speak constantly of the need to enforce "good behavior."

Their criticism is aimed, rather, at the governance of antipoverty policy. They rightly dispute the liberal notion that social programs must be conceived in Washington, then imposed on the local level through federal funding and regulations. States and localities, they argue, can better design their own programs. The monopoly of public bureaucracies in delivering services should also be broken; local governments (through contracting) and clients (through vouchers) should force agencies to compete with private and nonprofit alternatives, especially in education. Local self-help organizations, created by the poor themselves, should be freed from inhibiting regulations. In short, the authors advocate the decentralized style of administration that Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus have dubbed "mediating structures."

This is not to say, however, that national responsibility would be ended. Washington would continue to provide some funding and set a few national goals. It would require that states provide minimal welfare benefits and that working Americans see to their own catastrophic health and nursing-home insurance. In this conservative vision of social policy, such mandates take over much of the role played by federal grants in liberal conceptions. In other words, Butler and Kondratas retain a federal role, but redefine it for conservative ends.

One might hence suppose the authors would endorse the workfare movement, which has been based on just the kind of locally-developed programs they espouse. But, surprisingly, they accept only that experimentation should continue. They resist the notion that it is time to add definite work requirements to welfare nationwide. They warn that workfare might be oppressive and cost more than it saves.

Their doubt reflects more than the conservative fear of federal power. Like liberals, they want government only to play a "supporting role," not to tell the poor what to do. Like liberals, they yearn to take for granted what they actually must create —the motivation of the poor to help themselves. They delight in discovering in self-help bodies the energy of poor people who have *already* asserted responsibilty for themselves.

But there are too few such organizations, just as there are too few Americans who are simultaneously poor and self-reliant. Those who accept responsibility for themselves are seldom poor for long, and those who remain poor seldom feel they can control their fate. To lean as heavily as Butler and Kondratas do on local organization is to repeat the vain liberal hopes of the 1960's that the poor could progress through "community action." People must deal with their personal problems before they can tackle political ones. How to overcome the passivity of the poor on their *own* behalf remains the great question.

A more confident and realistic conservatism appears in *The New Consensus on Family and Welfare*, the report of the Working Seminar on the Family and American Welfare Policy, a group of experts led by Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute.† This study is perhaps the widest-ranging of the many issued by organizations in the year after the Reagan administration announced its intention to reform welfare. It is as concerned for values as Butler and Kondratas and as blunt about dysfunction as Wilson. It covers the entire poverty problem, but concentrates especially on the "behavioral dependency" that the entrenched poor bring on themselves. It stresses the role that the private sector must play in solutions, and it endorses social administration via "mediating structures." But it is also readier than conventional conservatives have been to change

* Free Press, 264 pp., $17.95. I reviewed this book in the *Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 1987.

† University Press of America, 143 pp., $9.75. Both Kondratas and I were members of the Seminar.

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federal rules to enforce norms. There is a realization that the dependent poor already live under government, and that without action by public authority no other suasions can be effective. Alongside appeals to nonprofit institutions to uphold mores, the report advocates tougher law enforcement and school standards at the local level plus stricter child-support enforcement and stronger work or education requirements for welfare recipients, backed up by sanctions. Much of this would entail changes in federal law.

We have here a vision of how public and private authorities might operate in tandem to reinforce the civilities essential to American freedom. The great divide between the public and private sectors, which so exercises American politics, is here deemphasized, so that both sectors may instead address the problems of disorder. Society's needs, not ideology, set the terms for action. What is conserved is social values rather than, as in conventional conservatism, freedom from government itself.

So much for the state of the intellectual debate. The residue of all these reasonings can be seen in the current fight in Congress over workfare. At first glance, there appears to be broad agreement that welfare should do more to promote work effort by the poor. But differences over the nature of work programs show that older partisan divisions persist and that *requiring* work remains intensely controversial.

Welfare policy-makers no longer speak from the political extremes. They are too alarmed about dysfunction among the poor to be shamed any longer by the arguments of the Left. Few now believe that a further redistribution of income or benefits would do much of itself to stanch the plague of crime and illegitimacy in the inner city. On the other hand, few propose to instill responsibility *à la* Charles Murray, simply by cutting back welfare benefits or eligibility.

Within the shrunken spectrum of congressional politics, the Left is represented by irresolute liberals who grudgingly recognize the problems of welfare but who can imagine no new response. They want to spend more on the essentially voluntary kind of work programs that have already failed to raise work levels. Their rhetoric speaks of "investment" in people in order to spur productivity, but as in the past they take for granted precisely what is at issue—the commitment of the poor to make good use of such opportunities.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York is the unquestioned leader of this group. He has great credibility on welfare because, more than twenty years ago, he was one of the first to speak candidly about disorders among the poor. In his controversial policy paper, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" (1965), which became known as the Moynihan Report, he pointed out that the decay of the black family would impede the ability of many blacks to make use of the new opportunities they had won through civil rights. He was shouted down by liberals and black spokesmen, but the black family went on decaying until even black leaders were forced to acknowledge it. Today, bloodied but unbowed, he leads a chorus of liberal commentators who pride themselves on a new honesty about the social problem.

But what are they going to *do* about it? That is the rub. In 1986, Moynihan published his own treatise, *Family and Nation.** One searches its pages in vain for innovative proposals. In large measure the book updates the report. With copious statistics, it bemoans the trends toward social dissolution among black and white families alike. But it can suggest little response other than a minimum welfare benefit and more money spent on employment programs for the young. Moynihan would also crack down on child support—a welcome move, but one that would do little to promote effort by adults on welfare. For Democrats, then, social reform still means essentially spending money on problems without sharing responsibility for solutions with the receipients.

For their part, Republicans have abandoned the traditional conservative goal of getting welfare out of Washington. Early in its term, the Reagan administration proposed to devolve AFDC and other welfare programs (other than Medicaid) entirely to the states. Congress refused. In 1986 the administration advocated further experimentation with workfare at the local level, but accepted continuing federal funding, much along the lines Butler and Kondratas favor. It also proposed, in the spirit of the Working Seminar, to strengthen work and child-support requirements from the federal level.

The two sides then fielded their respective reform plans in Congress. The main Democratic bills were written in the Senate by Moynihan, in the House by Thomas Downey; the Moynihan plan has some Republican support. The leading Republican proposal was a House bill written by Hank Brown and Bob Michel and later endorsed by the administration. In many respects the proposals look similar, and this has led the press to overstate the degree of actual agreement. In fact, on the narrow subject of workfare, the plans perpetuate the differences that have separated the parties over social policy since the New Deal.

On December 16, 1987, the House adopted the Downey bill on a largely party-line vote; in the Senate, Moynihan's bill will come to the floor some time in the spring. The final legislation, thus, will probably involve a compromise of the two Democratic bills. Republican ideas will have little influence unless a forceful threat of a veto comes from the White House, and that seems unlikely. The major battle appears already over. Yet much

* See the article by Glenn C. Loury, "The Family, the Nation, and Senator Moynihan," COMMENTARY, June 1986.

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more was at stake in it than most commentators have realized.

The most visible issue is the scale of government effort—the traditional nub of partisan dispute. The Democratic bills are benefit-oriented. They require that state AFDC programs cover two-parent families where the father is unemployed (this is now an option), and they would spend more on training and child-care services for recipients seeking to work. As a result, according to estimates from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Moynihan bill would raise welfare costs by $2.3 billion over five years, the Downey bill by $5.7 billion. Those are small sums compared with the cost of past welfare-reform plans, but hardly negligible with the federal budget so severely in deficit. The defeated Republican bill, which avoided benefit increases, would have cost only $1.1 billion.

A second issue is federal control. The Democratic plans continue the tradition of setting even the details of welfare policy from Washington. The rejected Republican bill would have expanded the states' freedom to experiment, to the point where there would less clearly be a national welfare policy.

A third issue is the quality of jobs the programs could ask receipients to take. The Democratic plans avoid forcing recipients to take jobs beneath their expectations. More training for "better" jobs is offered as an alternative to menial work. New restrictions make it harder to move clients toward work in available jobs. Recipients can demand better child care before accepting work, and they need not take jobs that, due to loss of benefits, would reduce their net income.

The Republicans were much readier to require work in available jobs, because they thought it fair and they doubted the capacity of training to raise skills and wages. They wanted welfare adults above all to become working, or "deserving," poor, whether or not this raised incomes. Since when, they reasoned, did the working poor ever expect to go first-class? Rather, they expected to be working-class, and their children middle-class; no society has ever offered more.*

These disputes over cost, federal control, and job standards have complicated the current debate in Congress, but they are extraneous to the central issue—whether reform should truly *require* adult recipients to work, as against just offering them the chance to do so. In theory, such a requirement has existed since 1967. All recipients are judged employable if they are sixteen or over, not in school, and without responsibilities in the home such as children under age six. (Those restrictions already exempt two-thirds of welfare mothers.) But usually the only thing an employable person must do is to register with the work program. The proportion of registrants who are summoned to participate actively is small, a third or less—federal rules set a minimum of only 15 percent. Typically work programs "cream"—serving only the most employable recipients and forgetting the rest. Since the clients chosen are those most likely to go to work anyway, such programs have little real effect on the welfare problem. Despite twenty years of "work requirements," the work test remains a formality for most recipients.

The Democratic bills expand the employable pool by exempting only those mothers with children under three, a desirable step. But the change would have little impact because nothing would be done to raise participation in work programs. States could undertake to do so, with Washington paying most of the cost, but they would not have to. Even the existing 15-percent floor is deleted.

The Republicans, by contrast, would have raised participation levels sharply. States would have had to have 80 percent of teen-age recipients in school within three years, and would have had to raise the participation rate in work programs from 15 to 70 percent over nine years. Many local administrators blanched at the challenge, and this is one reason the Democratic bills omit any participation standards.

The difference in outcomes between the two approaches would have been stark. In a given year, over two million employable recipients are registered in work programs, but only about 700,000 participate actively. According to CBO estimates, the Downey bill, despite its cost, would over five years add only 210,000 more participants and cause only 15,000 families to leave welfare. The comparable figures for the Moynihan bill are even more modest—86,000 and 10,000. But the Republican bill would have raised participation by 935,000, or more than four times Downey, and would have ushered 50,000 families off the rolls. It would have done this at low net cost because the expense of serving the new participants would

* The desire to raise job quality has been the real agenda behind proposals by some liberal intellectuals to replace welfare with public employment. The idea is that needy mothers, rather than being given income, should be guaranteed jobs in government. Mickey Kaus proposed this in a widely-noted article in the *New Republic* in 1986, as did Irwin Garfinkel and Sarah McLanahan in *Single Mothers and Their Children*.

The idea sounds like workfare but raises many practical objections. It would encounter prohibitive opposition from government unions; it would be much more expensive than private-sector workfare; and there seems little need for it as long as private jobs are plentiful. Above all, it might not truly require work. Supposedly, public jobs, paying only the minimum wage or less, would act as a lever to persuade the dependent to move to the private sector. But whenever government jobs have been created on a large scale, they have usually paid more than this. Once public jobs are the norm, the pressure is irresistible to make them "good" jobs, which then discourage recipients from taking the private jobs they can get. Furthermore, too much emphasis on guaranteed employment makes work more secure than it can ever be in the private sector. It becomes a benefit and not an obligation, in truth just another form of welfare.

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have been largely financed by savings to welfare as more clients entered jobs.

Clearly, it is the Republican plan that might over time have transformed the passive character of welfare, by establishing the effort to better oneself as the norm for dependent adults. True, everything would have depended on the implementation. Even were serious requirements enacted, Congress would have to support them over years, and localities would have to develop effective programs, before workfare became a reality "on the ground." But the first step must be legislation.

The major liberal scruple about workfare remains the idea that the dependent should *have* to do anything to help themselves. On the Left, the poor above all still retain the identity of claimants for whom things are done. That idea is what welfare reform must change, as it has become a greater impediment to employment than all others. Whatever the amount spent on workfare, whatever the job standard proposed, no real progress in welfare is imaginable until government obligates needy adults to assume greater responsibility for their condition. The onus of achieving employment must be explicitly shared between them and government, with the latter providing needed benefits but the former contributing a commitment to work. Unfortunately, the defeat of the Republican bill pushes serious work obligations some years further off.

WORKFARE involves immediate political risks for both liberals and conservatives, because the notion of using government to enforce norms is so sensitive an issue in each tradition. There are longer-term risks as well. Since the Great Society, all fundamental social reform has been blocked by the stubborn persistence of a nonfunctioning welfare class. In the face of that dilemma, neither Left nor Right has mustered the political support it would need to implement its prescription for the nation. The American people reject more redistribution as long as a major part of the poor appear undeserving, but neither will they permit major cutbacks in social benefits as long as so many people remain needy.

If a serious workfare policy were to succeed in reducing dependency, the poor would appear more functional. Which side then would inherit the initiative in social policy? By causing more poor adults to enter available jobs, workfare would diminish their need and, by that standard, their claims on government. The welfare nightmare would recede, and Americans would awake to find themselves again a nation of self-reliant citizens. Conservatives could then make stronger headway toward cutting income benefits and returning to a more free-market society.

But equally, workfare might lead to a more radical politics. With more adults working, the disadvantaged would become more able to demand things the way the middle class does—on the basis of desert rather than need. They would have greater power, both economic and political, to prosecute their claims. They could form stronger unions and shift electoral politics to the Left. We might finally see a self-conscious socialist movement in the United States.

Both Left and Right may wish to go on tinkering with welfare, preferring the devil they know to the daunting vistas opened by true reform. But this would be wrong. To restore civility to welfare would serve each side's leading value. It would advance equality, as the poor would be better off. And it would recover for them the essence of freedom as Americans historically have known it, which is to participate as equivalent citizens in a common society.

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Do Spies Matter?

Eric M. Breindel

It is often said that spies are largely irrelevant to the overall course of international politics. Epidemics of treason may be disturbing for what they imply about the societies that spawn traitors, but espionage itself—or so it is claimed—has had a relatively minor impact on world affairs.

With respect to contemporary events, the validity of this argument is difficult to assess. Is it true, for example, that notwithstanding all the excitement caused by the uncovering of the Walker family spy ring, the naval secrets they passed to Moscow were of comparatively little moment? Too much of the relevant information is classified to permit a fully balanced answer to this question. But already there are indications that even in this age of open skies and on-site inspection, the Walkers and their confederates did serious harm to American strategic interests.

The same sort of skepticism has been expressed about the major espionage cases of the last generation; about the activities of Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt, Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess, and their colleagues in England, and, on this side of the Atlantic, about the atomic-espionage ring headed up by Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Indeed, so much doubt has been raised about the Rosenberg case in particular that their insignificance as spies is now a piece of received wisdom. Even the overwhelming evidence skillfully marshaled by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton in *The Rosenberg File*, showing that the Rosenberg ring did indeed pass important information on atomic weapons to the Soviets, has not sufficed to shake the widespread conviction that they did not steal the secret of the atomic bomb (it is even argued that no such secret existed to be stolen).

The issue of whether spies matter has been raised yet again by a number of new books on the British traitors—and by two new books on the recently deceased physicist-spy Klaus Fuchs. Strikingly, all of these books demonstrate, in one way or another, that Philby, Blunt, Maclean, Burgess, Fuchs, *et al.* did cause real and lasting damage to Western interests.

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Also apparent from these new studies is that in the late 30's and on through the 40's and 50's, there were more traitors than anyone imagined—anyone, that is, save for isolated members of the British and American security services. Finally, a key message that emerges from the recent crop of espionage books is that the British traitors of that era, like their counterparts in the U.S. and in Canada, were motivated by an unbending faith in Communism and the Soviet Union. What drove them was not the fact that they were social misfits—some were, others were not; not the fact that they were homosexuals—some were, others were not; and not the fact that they came from the privileged classes—some did, others did not. The one thing all of them had in common was their belief in Stalin, whose service they entered in the 1930's and in whom their faith was never shaken.

Peter Wright, a former assistant director of MI-5, the British counterintelligence and internal-security agency, was one of the few security officials unsurprised by later revelations about the breadth of the Soviet espionage apparatus in the West. His memoir, *Spycatcher**—a literary sensation, thanks to Margaret Thatcher's attempt to bar its publication in Great Britain—is a classic of the "I-tried-to-warn-them-but-they-wouldn't-listen" genre.

Wright first published his book in Australia (where he now lives) to escape the jurisdiction of the British Official Secrets Act. This by itself has been enough for some critics to dismiss him as one more disgruntled ex-employee railing against his former bosses. And Wright is, indeed, profoundly angry at the "gentlemen" of MI-5. On purely personal grounds, he feels the agency broke a gentleman's agreement with him concerning his pension. But he is bitter at the English upper classes in general—bitter over the condescension with which his Oxbridge-trained superiors at MI-5 treated him, a self-taught scientist who became a master of bugging, decoding, and airwave interception; and bitter about their relaxed, in his view, disposition toward treason.

Spycatcher is a sloppy, error-ridden work that

* Viking, 392 pp., $19.95.

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happens also to be fascinating, as well as fundamentally sound. It has proved something of a gift to the British Left, inasmuch as it depicts an out-of-control security service bugging telephones, opening private mail, and following people against whom no charges had been brought. This portrait has enabled Laborites to question Mrs. Thatcher's motives in banning the book's publication: might not the Prime Minister's concern have stemmed from the fact that MI-5 is still engaged in similar practices? But any book on this subject is bound to present material which can be used by enemies of intelligence services. Though the Radosh-Milton book on the Rosenbergs enters a devastating judgment of guilt against the couple, American leftists have for several years been citing it in order to demonstrate that the FBI routinely violates the civil liberties of American citizens. Surely this sort of manipulation is no reason not to write or publish such books. (A much better reason is the simple fact that if every disgruntled ex-intelligence officer were to produce such a detailed memoir, there would soon be no intelligence services.)

As for Wright's errors, they do not undermine confidence in the book's essential accuracy. That *Spycatcher* is absorbing comes as no surprise. This is, after all, the memoir of a key figure in the small group of British officials who worked on virtually every major espionage case of the postwar era. There was a parallel group of American officials —James J. Angleton of the CIA, Bill Harvey of the FBI and the CIA, Robert Lamphere of the FBI, and a few others—with whom Wright and his colleagues cooperated on an ongoing basis. The technical men on both sides of the Atlantic tended to feel that their governments, still basking in the glow of the wartime alliance with Moscow, did not appreciate the scope and significance of Soviet espionage activities in the West. The reason these men had come to a starker view of Soviet intentions and capabilities, and had done so even before the war ended, was simple: they knew about the breaking of the Soviet cipher, the code utilized by Moscow in running its global espionage network.

There had, to be sure, been warnings of what the Soviets were doing even before the war. A number of major defectors—General Walter Krivitsky, Alexander Orlov, Whittaker Chambers, and perhaps a dozen others—provided authorities with significant information on Soviet espionage activities. In many cases this information was taken seriously (although it has been reported that President Roosevelt mocked Assistant Secretary of State Adolph A. Berle when Berle brought to the White House information provided by Chambers on Alger Hiss and others). The real problem was that very little of what the defectors offered could be corroborated. Thus, until the codebreak—despite the warnings from defectors, and despite necessarily limited efforts by the FBI and the British services to keep a watch on domestic Communists—it simply had not been grasped by the Allied governments that there were Soviet espionage rings in Washington, New York, San Francisco, Ottawa, London, Shanghai, Tokyo, and elsewhere. It had not been realized that there were cells in the State Department, the Foreign Office, the OSS, and the Canadian Parliament. It had not been understood that these rings were run with military discipline by trained operatives reporting to Moscow.

The American success in breaking the Soviet code—in itself an extraordinary story—changed everything. As Wright explains:

> . . . The codebreak had a fundamental effect on cold-war attitudes among those few indoctrinated officers inside the British and American intelligence services. It became the wellspring for the new emphasis on counterespionage investigation. . . . More directly, it showed the worldwide scale of the Soviet espionage attack, at a time when the Western political leadership was apparently pursuing a policy of alliance and extending the hand of friendship.

"Indoctrinated" officers like Wright—the officials who were entrusted with the knowledge that the Soviet code had been broken and were afforded access to decrypted messages—felt a special sense of urgency about their work. In Wright's case, this was augmented by his entry into the nontechnical realm. He was involved, early on, in the Philby investigation. Eventually, he became an interrogator of Anthony Blunt and others suspected of espionage in connection with the Cambridge spy ring (so-called because most of its members had studied at that British university in the 30's).

No doubt Wright's book—and this is unfortunate—will be remembered for its most sensational charges. In the early 1960's, Wright grew obsessed with the notion that Sir Roger Hollis, the head of MI-5, was a Soviet "mole." (An imperfect but reasonably close parallel would be to contend that J. Edgar Hoover was a Soviet agent.) Wright believed Hollis had protected other Soviet agents, including Philby, and had seen to it that major investigations failed along with various covert operations.

Wright cannot prove the case against Hollis. He also suggests, but cannot prove, that former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson kept close company with Soviet agents, and that another Labor-party leader, Hugh Gaitskell, was murdered by the KGB to prevent him from becoming Prime Minister in 1964. The Wilson and Gaitskell tales, incredible though they are, remain minor elements in this memoir.

Not so Hollis. Yet Wright's inability to frame a fully persuasive indictment against the MI-5 chief does not mean the charge in this case is incredible. Indeed, to some extent it is Hollis himself who was incredible.

Everything Roger Hollis touched seemed to go

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bad; appalling miscalculations informed his entire career in intelligence. It is, admittedly, possible to look at each separate misjudgment and find that Hollis was not solely responsible for the failure. In the matter of Klaus Fuchs—the brilliant physicist and confessed atomic spy whose Communist ties were apparently known to authorities from the day he set foot in England as a Hitler refugee—some civil servant apparently persuaded Hollis to grant Fuchs a clearance so he could take part in building the bomb. In the case of Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, who made a safe getaway to the Soviet Union before they could be apprehended, it was the Foreign Office, not Hollis, that was directly responsible for allowing the two diplomats to escape. And so forth. But in the end, and especially in view of the fact that the Soviets did indeed penetrate British intelligence at an exceedingly high level, it is not so surprising that there are those who suspect Hollis.

IT IS interesting that this entire set of seemingly fantastic theories concerning Hollis, Wilson, and the death of Gaitskell can be traced to a single source: Anatoly Golitsyn, one of the most important of all Soviet defectors. Golitsyn was a KGB major who asked for asylum at the American embassy in Helsinki in 1961; he arrived bearing information not only about the British intelligence services, but also about Soviet penetration of the CIA. James J. Angleton, the head of CIA counterintelligence, became Golitsyn's chief patron, and set about acting on the information the defector provided by conducting internal investigations. In the process, Angleton came to be accused—even by some of his colleagues—of doing more damage to the CIA than any Soviet mole could dream of accomplishing. A parallel charge is often leveled at Wright, sometimes called the "British Angleton."

The two men were no doubt guilty of excesses. Wright, in particular, is still condemned as the "persecutor" of an entire generation of Oxbridge alumni—men in positions of power and influence throughout Britain whom he investigated as possible traitors. But there was a good deal to worry about. Domestic security was Wright's job, and Philby, Burgess, and Maclean were not figments of his imagination. What kind of counterintelligence officer would not pursue his quarry with enthusiasm? In his effort to collect confessions and ferret out additional names, there were no means available to him other than confrontation and intimidation. (By the time Wright undertook his "great mole hunt," the spying had mostly stopped, so wiretaps and mail covers would not have revealed much.) If it was crucial that the British security services endeavor to reconstruct the past in order to determine what had been compromised, the man charged with the task would inevitably become, as did Peter Wright, a terrible and threatening figure.

The voluntary confession of the American Michael Straight—who told the FBI in 1964 that he had been recruited in England by the Comintern while a student at Cambridge in the 30's—enabled the British to add a fourth name to the Philby-Burgess-Maclean triad, that of Sir Anthony Blunt, famed art historian, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, and former intelligence officer. Suddenly, MI-5 had two live witnesses to question (the first three men having long since fled to the Soviet Union). Straight was prepared to cooperate out of a sense of remorse; Blunt allowed himself to be questioned by Wright and others over a period of several years, but far less willingly. In exchange for a grant of immunity, a system evolved: Blunt would offer a name, and Wright would hunt down the individual in question, often with no hope of prosecuting the suspect if he refused to cooperate. But many—out of fear, or guilt, or both—did cooperate, and their names appear in this book. The list lends impressive credibility to the thesis that—from the Admiralty to the security services to the Foreign Office—a generation of Communists, many of whom probably committed espionage, had played key roles in governing Great Britain during the cold-war era.

Of all those in the British Establishment who became aware of Wright's work during the 1960's and 1970's, or who were interviewed as MI-5 sought to reconstruct the Cambridge ring and assess the damage, only Lord Victor Rothschild seems to have grasped the need to conduct a full retrospective inquiry. (Rothschild was himself a suspect for a time because of his close ties to Burgess and Blunt.) The more widely held view was that the past was just as well left alone; certainly this was Blunt's view.

In one of the most telling passages in *Spycatcher*, Wright presses Blunt to acknowledge that he had shielded Alister Watson, a fellow Cantabrigian subsequently employed by the Admiralty. Wright, having concluded that Watson, too, was a Soviet agent, chides Blunt for withholding the information: " 'You said there were no more, Anthony. You said you were telling me the truth.' " After a pause Blunt replies: " 'I could never be another Whittaker Chambers. . . . It's so McCarthyite, naming names, informing, witchhunts.' " Wright summons Blunt back to reality: " 'Anthony, that's why we gave you immunity.' "

The belief that no good would come of this effort to disinter the past was not unique to espionage suspects, or even to leftists. An inability to apprehend the seriousness of the crime seems the critical factor here—along with the sense that whatever the crime, the motive for it must have been positive. At one point in Wright's book, Blunt himself offers this standard apologia, condescendingly telling his interrogator that " 'unless you lived through [the period], Peter, you cannot understand. . . .' " Wright's rejoinder was quick: " 'Oh, I lived through it, Anthony. I know

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more about the 30's probably than you will ever know. I remember my father driving himself mad with drink because he couldn't get a job. I remember losing my education, my world, everything. I know about the 30's.' " It is an applause-inspiring moment.

BLUNT's career is traced in meticulous detail by Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman, two journalists for the *Times* of London, in *Conspiracy of Silence: The Secret Life of Anthony Blunt.** This well-written and thoughtful biography identifies Blunt primarily as a recruiter, or talent-spotter, for the Soviets, which means that the damage he caused can best be measured by the deeds of those he recruited. It is worth noting, however, that near the end of his life Blunt acknowledged (according to Penrose and Freeman) that he might also have been *personally* responsible for the deaths of British soldiers and intelligence agents during the early years of the war (" 'Some—not many . . .' ").

How so? During the 22-month Russo-German alliance (which ended in June 1941), there was a good deal of intelligence-sharing between Berlin and Moscow. Blunt was privy to the names of British agents on the ground in Europe. Like every other Soviet spy of this period, he passed on to his controllers literally everything that crossed his desk. The Soviets may in turn have given the names to the Gestapo—with obvious consequences. (Great Britain and Germany were already at war.) Later on, if any of the British agents survived the war and wound up inside the Soviet sphere, Moscow itself would almost certainly have taken action against them.

As for the many Soviet agents recruited by Blunt and Burgess, the identities of several have now (thanks to Wright and Penrose/Freeman) been confirmed beyond doubt. They include Leo Long, a Cambridge recruit who served in military intelligence and as an official of the British occupation regime in Germany. (Long confessed.) Another Cambridge recruit was John Cairncross, who after the war served in intelligence, in the Foreign Office, and at the Treasury before leaving England to work for the UN Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome. During the war itself, Cairncross was on the staff of the Bletchley Code and Cipher Center, and was involved in allied planning for the future of Yugoslavia. (Cairncross confessed but, like Long, denied having spied after the early 1950's.) The list also includes the aforementioned Alister Watson, whose particular expertise at the Admiralty was antisubmarine detection; Wright considers him to have been the individual Cambridge spy who did the most damage—a reasonable evaluation, given the importance of submarine capability to the East-West strategic balance. (Watson admitted to having been a Communist, and to having met with various KGB agents, but he never made a detailed confession.) Wright also uncovered an Oxford spy ring, parallel to the Cambridge ring. Among its likely members was an eventual Labor M.P., Bernard Floud, who committed suicide in the late 1960's after questioning by MI-5.

There are a number of other possible agents about whom Penrose and Freeman differ with Wright. Sir Dennis Proctor, a high-ranking civil servant who died in France in 1983, is one; and Penrose and Freeman also question Wright's conclusions about Alister Watson. None of the disputed cases is likely ever to be resolved. The true role, for example, of the late literary critic Goronwy Rees will almost certainly remain a mystery, as will the parts played by others who were investigated but never confessed.

The case of the Oxford philosopher Sir Stuart Hampshire points up another complicating feature of MI-5's retrospective effort to assess damage—namely, concern in England during the 1960's and 70's over what the reaction would be in Washington to repeated disclosures that the British intelligence services had been infiltrated. The very mention of Hampshire's name in connection with espionage outrages Penrose and Freeman, yet according to Wright, Hampshire acknowledged to MI-5 that Burgess had sought to recruit him before World War II. Hampshire apparently ignored the invitation, and went on to brilliant service as a wartime codebreaker. But when he returned to government on special assignment in 1965 to head up a special review of the GCHQ, the British equivalent of the National Security Agency, the fact of his past contact with Burgess was not recorded in his security file. It is possible that Hampshire, either deliberately or negligently, withheld this information. But it is rather more likely that top-level British government officials simply were not anxious that such things be recorded, and were themselves, therefore, responsible for the omission. The GCHQ project was bound up with a review of Anglo-American intelligence-sharing initiated by Washington, and a persistent theme in *Spycatcher* is the British fear that the U.S., fed up with the various security lapses, might terminate cooperation in the intelligence sphere.

This concern had a split impact. Where officials like Wright were all the more driven to root out spies and thus demonstrate Britain's seriousness of purpose, others sought to suppress information lest the CIA or the FBI finally decide that enough was enough. This latter fear was hardly groundless. Washington, despite its own security problems, was both amazed at and infuriated by the extraordinary degree of Soviet subversion in Britain.

YET the question still persists: given massive Soviet penetration, how extensive was the damage? The threads pulled to-

* Hill & Wang/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 588 pp., $22.95.

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gether in these and other recent books enable us at last to answer this question with some degree of precision. The subversion had its effect in two major areas: Eastern Europe and the atomic bomb. If, in the early postwar years, Moscow had failed to consolidate its hold in Eastern Europe, or had failed quickly to develop the atomic bomb, the Soviets would not have been able to enter the 1950's as a superpower—and would not have been emboldened to encourage the military confrontation in Korea that claimed 50,000 American lives. The Soviet agents in the West materially helped Moscow achieve both these goals.

On the issue of atomic espionage in particular, two new books about Klaus Fuchs afford an illuminating and dispassionate perspective. Both Norman Moss in *Klaus Fuchs: The Man Who Stole the Atom Bomb** and Robert Chadwell Williams in *Klaus Fuchs: Atom Spy*,† recognize that Moscow would eventually have developed the atomic bomb anyway (no argument to the contrary has ever been advanced in serious circles). But both also believe that Fuchs *alone*, quite apart from the contributions of such other agents as Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Alan Nunn May, and Bruno Pontecorvo, advanced the Soviet quest by a matter of years. Specifically, thanks to his time at Los Alamos, where the American bomb was developed, Fuchs was able to tell Moscow that an implosion plutonium bomb would work.

Both studies demonstrate the degree to which Fuchs was animated by ideological conviction. Whenever he somehow lost contact with his Soviet controllers, he would take steps to reestablish the link. He engaged in espionage until shortly before he was arrested in 1949—by then he was a senior scientist at the British atomic research center at Harwell. Sentenced to fourteen years in prison—his crime differed from treason under British law because the Soviet Union and Britain had not been at war—Fuchs served nine years and four months. Upon his release, he immediately emigrated to East Germany where he assumed a major scientific post. On board the airplane the day he left England—a country which had sheltered him from Hitler, educated and employed him—Fuchs told an Associate Press reporter: "I wish to say that I bear no resentment against Britain . . . for what has happened."

Fuchs's subsequent career in East Germany won him many honors, including election to the Central Committee of the Communist party. But, in an unusual restriction for someone of his stature, he was never permitted to travel to the West. It can only be concluded that security authorities deemed the risk too great that Fuchs might defect and then reveal the true scope of the information he had delivered to Moscow during his espionage days.

The notion that Fuchs's contribution was nothing short of momentous is strengthened by a highly unusual interview with Andrei Sakharov, published late last year in the English-language Moscow *News*. Commenting on the Soviet rocket program, Sakharov states that Klaus Fuchs "transmitted to the USSR, both during and after the war, highly important atomic secrets out of ideological conviction." Of this it can only be said that Sakharov, the father of the Soviet H-bomb, ought to know.

As FOR Eastern Europe, the effort to prevent Britain and the United States from frustrating Soviet policy there was carried forward by two sorts of agents. There were those like Kim Philby who betrayed to the Soviets various Western-backed commando operations aimed at sparking armed insurrection; and there were the "policy moles," ideological Communists who, after locating themselves in strategic posts in the British (or American) government, sought to influence policy in a direction favorable to Stalin. Anthony Glees, in *The Secrets of the Service*,** argues that these latter efforts were at least as significant as was out-and-out espionage.

A good example of the policy mole is James Klugman, a Cambridge man who later became the official historian of the British Communist party. Based in Cairo during World War II as an officer of the Special Operations Executive (roughly, the British equivalent of the OSS), Klugman was one of at least six Communist moles in that organization. He was able to persuade London that in Yugoslavia the brunt of the partisan war against Hitler was being borne by Tito and the Communists rather than by Mihailovitch and the Royalists. The wartime British decision to aid Tito, a decision influenced in no small part by Klugman, proved enormously important to the eventual postwar fate of Yugoslavia.

In *The Secrets of the Service* Glees also discusses the activities of Christopher Hill, an important wartime Foreign Office adviser on Anglo-Soviet relations and later the Master of Balliol College, Oxford. Hill was a member of the British Communist party until 1957, and as Glees demonstrates, he and others like him tendered advice to the Foreign Office that left Britain systematically "ignorant about Soviet intentions." (Hill acknowledged to Glees that he did not broadcast the fact of his party membership, but also maintained that his left-wing views were no secret, and that he never actually took direct instructions from Moscow.)

When one considers the fact that London was getting advice from the likes of Hill, various wartime decisions become a good deal easier to understand: for example, the decision not to monitor Soviet code communications during the war, which allowed the espionage rings to flourish; or Wins-

* St. Martin's, 216 pp., $16.95.
† Harvard University Press, 267 pp., $25.00.
** Carroll & Graf, 447 pp., $22.95.

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ton Churchill's otherwise surprising willingness to take at face value Stalin's promises about the future of Poland; or indeed the whole series of British "miscalculations" that facilitated Moscow's consolidation of power in Eastern Europe.

The part played by Communist agents in frustrating operations intended to lead to armed revolt in Eastern Europe has been known for some time—thanks in part to boastful passages in Kim Philby's autobiography concerning the failed Anglo-American effort to infiltrate armed Albanian émigrés back into their native land from Greece, a debacle that resulted in the capture and death of virtually every agent involved. Philby, who was closely involved in the planning, betrayed the entire operation. And, as Chapman Pincher notes in *Traitors: The Anatomy of Treason,** Philby was responsible for giving away teams of parachutists dropped into Poland and the Eastern Ukraine in the late 1940's, also in hopes of fomenting popular uprisings.

There has been a tendency in some circles to regard all these operations with a degree of scorn, accepting the notion that they were wholly unrealistic enterprises, doomed from the outset. Actually, however, given rising levels of popular discontent in Eastern Europe as Stalinist repression intensified, it is not at all clear that these undertakings were destined to fail. And in view of the likely impact of a *successful* revolt inside the Soviet bloc, the betrayal of these operations by Philby and others was tremendously important—one of the many important contributions these ideologically inspired spies made to Moscow; one of the many ways in which their treasonous activities harmed the West.

* St. Martin's, 346 pp., $19.95.

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No Pulitzer for Pinsker

A Story

Joseph Epstein

CHARACTER is fate, as someone once said, but so is the alphabet, as Melvin A. Rosen has reason to know. I am Melvin A. (for Arnold) Rosen and I have often thought that if my last name were Brodsky or Ginsberg or Singer I would never have gotten as mixed up as I have with Ira L. Pinsker, the novelist. Pinsker and I go all the way back to grammar school. I remember the day he walked into our class, the fifth grade at De Witt Clinton Elementary School in West Rogers Park on the far North Side of Chicago. He was a tall kid, even then, with almost too erect a posture and an odd wandering look in his eyes as if he might have needed glasses, which he didn't.

"Class," announced Miss Schoenie, our very flat-chested teacher who had calves as muscular as those of the University of Illinois halfback Buddy Young, "I should like to introduce Ira Pinsker, who has transferred from the Shakespeare Elementary School. Mr. Pinsker, please take the desk in front of Melvin Rosen. Mr. Rosen, please raise your hand so Mr. Pinsker will know who you are."

Pinsker, then ten years old, headed in my direction, near the end of the fifth row from the door, barely avoiding being tripped by a jolly fat boy named Donnie Olsen. As he dropped himself in the seat in front of mine, I recall looking into the back of his long head, a thing I did a great deal of that fifth-grade year, and thinking, "This is a strange guy."

What can I tell you about Ira Pinsker? What can't I tell you about Ira Pinsker? I can tell you about the time he nearly got me killed on the road out of Memphis. I can tell you about the time he sicked a serious paranoiac on me, causing me to tremble every time I left my apartment. I can tell you about the time I had to depart a Lutheran church in Cicero, Illinois, before he caused me to break down with screaming laughter in the middle of his own wedding ceremony. I can tell you about the hundreds of minor mental contusions that Ira L. (the L stands for Lyle) Pinsker has caused me merely by being his strange self: Pinsker the pretentious, Pinsker the oblivious, Pinsker the tremendously awkward, Pinsker the terrifically irritating, Pinsker the (I sometimes think) lunatic.

His first day in school, Pinsker got into a fight. That in itself was not unusual. A new boy in a Chicago grammar school in those days was often teased and called upon to demonstrate his manliness. Only Pinsker had the misfortune to get into a fight with Denny Cook, the son of a janitor, the class clown, and easily the toughest kid in the fifth grade. I don't know how it started. All I know is that toward the end of the afternoon the word was going around that Denny was going to cream the new kid after school.

We gathered on the gravel schoolyard at three o'clock. Denny Cook came out first, and began shadowboxing. He was three or four inches shorter than Pinsker and maybe ten or fifteen pounds lighter, but he was wiry, had a hot temper, and hated losing. "Here's the jerk now," someone yelled, as Pinsker approached. He was wearing a leather jacket of a kind I have never seen before or since: it had a yellowish tint and slash pockets that closed with zippers and buttons at the cuffs. Pinsker retained this strange taste for odd items of apparel. He once owned a pair of football cleats that were suede, and in high school he played basketball at the YMCA in sweat pants held up by a piece of rough twine. In adult life he wore shirts that looked as if they might have been made in iron-curtain countries, and his taste in neckties was not up to the level of atrocious.

"Ready to get your block knocked off?" said Denny. Pinsker said nothing, but took off his goofy jacket, which he handed to me, who was standing in the circle that had gathered around. Those were the days when Don Dunphy was announcing the Friday night fights over the radio for Gillette, and Denny Cook decided to announce his own fight even while fighting it. "The champ comes out of his corner and cautiously circles the big dope," he said, doing just that. "He leads with two quick jabs to the nose," and—*whap! whap!*—there they were. The blood ran from Pinsker's nostrils. "The champ feints with a left to the body and throws a right cross that lands on the mouth"—and so it did, causing Pinsker's gums to bleed. "The big dope looks dazed," announced Denny, in his Don Dunphy voice, stepping in to throw

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two more quick left jabs to Pinsker's face and then a smashing right hand—*oomph!*—to the stomach. Pinsker, the wind knocked out of him, fell to one knee, the gravel cutting into his corduroy pants.

"C'mon," I heard myself call out, "he's had enough, Denny. Leave him alone."

Denny Cook shot both arms into the air. "It looks like a TKO for the champ," he yelled, getting something of Dunphy's ringside hysteria into his voice, jumping up and down, dancing around as if he were in the ring at Madison Square Garden.

When the crowd of kids had dispersed, I was still standing over Ira Pinsker, holding his jacket. He was on the ground on all fours now, his nose and mouth bleeding, his pants leg torn, trying to catch his breath. "You going to be all right?" I asked. Not having caught his breath sufficiently to talk, he nodded his head. Funny—he never cried. I walked home with him; he lived two blocks from where I did. All the way home he kept repeating, "My mother is going to kill me for these ripped pants." But still he didn't cry.

THAT first day in the fifth grade at Clinton was decisive for Ira Pinsker. He was not merely badly beaten, but he became, because of the ease and stylishness with which it was done, the class goat. Everyone called him "Pinky," and much worse. Most of our fathers were men on the way up in the world—doctors and lawyers and owners of their own profitable businesses—while Pinsker's father sold women's cosmetics and, apparently, didn't do all that well at it. I say this because the word got around that Mr. Pinsker was an accordion player with a miserable little band that used to play at weddings and bar-mitzvah parties on weekends. Pinsker's old man's accordion became a big joke.

Ira was a decent enough student, but his early growth made him extremely awkward, and his every screw-up, of which there were many in the classroom, on the playground, at the movies, sent us into wild laughter. He hung in there, trying to compete, but he was a marked man—sent out to the boyhood Siberia of right field in baseball, inserted into the pillory of center on our class football team. Slow on the comeback, he could be teased with impunity. "Hey, Pinky, you futz, how's your old man's accordion?" Kids would call large orders in to local drugstores to be sent to his house: three quarts of hand-packed ice cream, tubes of Ben-Gay, cans of pipe tobacco, boxes of Kotex. Orders from Chinese restaurants mysteriously arrived at the Pinsker home. Girls, knowing he was the class goat, never took him seriously. Once he threw up on a high ride at Riverview Park; this was good for months of laughs. We all of us had our best friends—I must have run through five or six of them—or fell in with little cliques. Not Pinsker. Coming out of grammar-school graduation, Donnie Olsen threw a dime cherry pie at him; it missed his head, but caught him flush on the shirt front and ran down the ridiculous hand-painted tie that must have belonged to his father.

I would like to be able to report that I was the sensitive kid who stood by Pinsker through these years. I wasn't. The best I can say for myself is that I was fairly low on the list of his tormentors. I can't say that I ever tried to establish a friendship with Pinsker, but then intimacy seemed somehow impossible with him. For example, he never called me anything but Melvin, a name I hate. (Mel I can live with.) He didn't have the mental quickness and comic sense I required in a friend. His slowness, his physical awkwardness, made him seem a little—I don't know, maybe a little irregular or less than fully human.

High school wasn't much easier for Pinsker. Ours was a large high school, with some 3,000 students, and very social. Pinsker once again fell into his by-now accustomed role of outsider. His reputation as a goat had followed him. By his sophomore year he had grown to about 6'2", without any notable gain in coordination. Yet you had to grant Ira his determination—maybe doggedness is the better word. He went out for track, and ran the mile. Day after day he would run his laps, chugging and churning and growing red in the face. In city track meets, over three years, he never came close to winning a race. Eventually, in his senior year, he was awarded a minor letter.

In high school something new that would grow greater in later years first began to show up in Pinsker—illusions of grandeur. Its early evidence was to be found in his attempting to court only the most beautiful girls in the school. He would call them for dates; he would hang around them in the school corridors. These girls usually had some refinement—he had good taste in women, Pinsker—and none was ever rude to him. But unrudeness was as far as he got. What is of interest, however, was the element of self-deception. Pinsker apparently hadn't a clue that a man with his lowly status was out of place asking such girls out. Nor was Pinsker above putting down fellow students, at least in conversation, for what he thought was their crudity or stupidity. Insufficient self-esteem was not Ira's problem. He was a goat who was also something of a snob. It's not a combination you run into every day.

Which brings me to Harvey Silvers. Harvey was a foot, maybe more, shorter than Ira Pinsker. Silvers's hair was yellow, wavy, and fine, while Pinsker's was brown, lank, and dull. Pinsker's awkwardness made him always a dangerous guest among the bric-a-brac of any mother's living room; Silvers was a wonderfully smooth dancer. Pinsker struggled for words, usually coming up with the wrong or unintentionally comic ones; Silvers had the quickness of a Catskills comedian. Harvey's father owned three men's clothing stores in Chicago, and his son wore cashmere sweaters,

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mohair polo coats, elegant loafers. On weekends, and most week nights, he had the use of his father's white Fleetwood Cadillac. His family's money gave Harvey an easy confidence; the world was not in any way a frightening or puzzling place for him but instead a kind of amusement park. And one of the most amusing things in it for Harvey Silvers was Ira L. Pinsker.

When we were kids there was a comic book called *The Fox and the Crow*. The inspiration for it must have come from either Aesop or La Fontaine, I don't know which, but the comic book was a lot funnier than both those guys. What it was about was endless stories in which the Crow inevitably bested the Fox, usually after working out richly detailed schemes for which the Fox would fall. On the final page of drawings, the long and lankish Fox could be found chased by bees, or felled by a giant tree, or hanging by his fingernails from a cliff. As often as not, x's denoting painful unconsciousness were drawn where the Fox's eyes were, while the compact Crow would be shown cheerfully emptying the Fox's refrigerator of hams, turkeys, aromatic pies, and lavish clumps of grapes. The relationship between Ira Pinsker and Harvey Silvers was essentially that between the Fox and the Crow.

During a dull moment cruising around in his father's Fleetwood one Saturday evening, Harvey remarked that he needed to take a leak. When I proposed a nearby alley, he offered a counterproposal of the floor of the back seat of Pinsker's father's Nash, which, fewer than ten minutes later, his polo coat thrown wide open, grin on face, he was acting upon. Another night, as we were finishing a pizza at Papa Milano's on Rush Street, Harvey suggested that Pinsker might like the four or five slices remaining; and so, when we were back in the neighborhood, we drove over to Pinsker's house, where Harvey deposited the uncovered pieces through the mail slot onto the floor of the Pinsker foyer. Although I wasn't along, one night, around three in the morning, Harvey, unable to sleep and feeling an artistic urge, drove over and painted the Pinskers' small front lawn white. "Actually," I heard him correct someone else who told the story in front of him, "the color was called 'champagne velvet.' "

ANYONE with good instincts, hearing these stories, is likely to feel sorry for poor Pinsker, bullied and abused by a vicious rich kid. But to feel this way you would need not only good instincts but absolutely no firsthand dealings with Ira Pinsker. Maybe I am myself unusually sympathetic to Harvey Silvers, who has since had a triple bypass operation and is paying out something like ninety grand a year in alimony to two ex-wives. But I happen to think that Harvey and Ira nicely complemented each other. Through their last years of high school, Pinsker would call Harvey to ask if he could tag along with him on a Friday night; and Harvey often went out of his way to pick up Pinsker at Winnemac Park or Hansen Stadium on the West Side after one or another of Pinsker's hopeless track meets. What, after all, was the Fox without the Crow, the Crow without the Fox?

The night we were about to drive to Kankakee for a visit to one of that town's cat houses, Harvey, who was doing the driving, swung around to pick up Pinsker. When someone asked what the hell do we need Pinsker for, Harvey replied, "Why not, the jerk-off's good for laughs." Pinsker was a virgin, and on the ride up of sixty or so miles, Harvey was full of bogus instructions for him, delivered in the solemn voice of a wise uncle. "Ira, whatever you do, don't let her talk you into taking off your socks." "Ira, don't be alarmed if in the middle of things she reaches under the bed and brings up a dry-cell battery." "Just remember, Ira, at all times keep your legs on the outside of hers."

On the way back we all told stories about our adventures, stories that, if my own little narratives are any measure, were a mixture of exaggerations, added comic touches, and straight-out inventions. All but Pinsker, who was stony silent. "So, Ira," Harvey asked, "how didya like it?" After at least fully ten seconds of silence, Pinsker, sitting erect in the middle of the back seat, said, "Harvey, I hope that there will be no idle chatter about this evening." From my own seat next to Harvey's in the front of the Fleetwood, I saw his eyes come alive, a small smile play on his lips. "Idle chatter, Ira?" he said. "What do you mean?" "You know what I mean, Silvers," Pinsker said. "It would be very bad if there were a lot of loose talk about what went on this evening." "Idle chatter? Loose talk? Pinsker, may I ask you a question? What freakin' century are you living in?"

For the remainder of his days in high school Ira was known as I.C. Pinsker, the I.C. standing for idle chatter.

He seemed to have a genius for the wrong phrase—a God-given skill for saying or doing exactly the wrong thing at exactly the wrong time. When years later Pinsker went off to the University of Iowa, where no one knew anything of his past, he returned with an odd, almost but not quite English accent. (Iowa may seem a strange place to acquire such an accent, but then we are talking about Ira L. Pinsker.) Maybe it wasn't quite an accent so much as it was that he now tended to speak in something like italics, every word strongly emphasized and calling attention to itself. To his earlier talent for the inappropriate, he now added certain stiff new phrases. "See here," he would say to the kid cleaning his windshield at a gas station, "do get the back windows as well." Or, addressing a high-school girl bagging groceries in the supermarket: "Indeed, if I may, mightn't I have these groceries placed in two separate bags?" But he really went too far, I thought, when at his own wedding, to a Lutheran girl from South

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Dakota named Linda Fergusson, he was asked by the minister if he would take this woman to be his lawful wedded wife, Pinsker replied neither "I do" nor "I will," but "I shall." I suppose we were lucky that he didn't say, "I daresay I shall." I was one of four people at his wedding—neither his own nor his wife's parents attended—and when I reported this "I shall" business to Harvey Silvers, he smiled and said, "That Pinsker—what a pluperfect schmuck!"

Why did I stay in touch with Pinsker after high school? Well, we went back a long way together since that first day he sat in front of me—P before R—in grammar school. Maybe I'm sentimental, but I don't find it easy to break off with people—never have, and I still occasionally see four or five guys I knew in high school. Yet maybe there was something more to it with Pinsker. Although I always knew he was a little nutty, that he was acting a leading part in some play that had a long run in his head alone, despite this I thought that he had a weirdly impressive courage. Running all those losing miles in high school, for instance; or refusing to have any other than the highest opinion of himself, even in the face of ridicule.

I remember a YMCA basketball team he organized during our last year of high school. Pinsker, at 6'3", was our center. He played in sweat pants, often with a rope and sometimes with his street belt holding them up, a torn track jersey, and Chuck Taylor All Stars that his mother must have put in the washer with something very red, for Pinsker's gym shoes were hopelessly pink, the only pair of pink Chuck Taylors I have ever seen. He had still not yet come into his coordination, and there was something almost painfully rigid about his performance on the basketball court. Smaller men ran circles around Pinsker, larger ones beat on him at will, cracking him with elbows in the ribs, knocking him to the floor, cutting him up pretty badly generally. Yet Pinsker kept coming at them. He couldn't win but he wouldn't quit. Doggedly, relentlessly, probably stupidly, Pinsker hung in there. At the end of the season our team —we called ourselves (what else?) the Idle Chatterers—was 4 and 11, and yet, somehow, though we weren't even close to getting into the playoffs, it was a satisfying season and I came away with a certain respect for Ira's tenacity.

I WENT to college in the city and then to law school at Northwestern University. "Studying torts and chasing tarts," Harvey Silvers used to joke about me in those days. (Harvey went a year to Roosevelt University, where he found himself interested in accounting, until his father asked him why. "You don't study accounting," he told Harvey, "you hire accountants." This caused Harvey to drop out of school and go directly, at nineteen, into his father's business, at which point he began to drive a Cadillac of his own.) I bring up Harvey's torts-and-tarts crack not to brag, but the fact is that I wasn't too bad with women in those days. I had two older sisters at home; I therefore had a good sense of what makes women interested in men; and I had a normal young man's voracious appetite for sex. Above all I understood that in order to have a girl surrender to you, you had to make a respectable show of surrendering to her first. This, for some reason, I never had any trouble doing. The truth is, I grew up a sister's boy; I liked women, and, with a wife now of twenty-five years and a daughter of twenty-two, I still do. I wouldn't carry on about this if my good friend Ira Pinsker, the novelist, hadn't made it important that I establish my bona fides in the matter.

By the time I was in my second year of law school, Pinsker had probably decided to become a writer. At any rate, he had begun to work at that series of hopeless jobs ill-performed that he retained until he produced his first novel at age fifty-two: hotel clerk, cabdriver, fundraiser for failing colleges, public-relations consultant for charities devoted to secondary diseases, headhunter for corporations located in out-of-the-way states. It was while he was working as night clerk at the old Commonwealth Hotel, off Diversey Avenue, near Sheridan Road, that he called on me in my capacity as moderately successful seducer of young women. He had met and quickly struck out with a beautiful Southerner who lived in the hotel, and he thought maybe I could do better. Pinsker was not known for his generosity, but I nonetheless answered the call.

I once read that it isn't a good idea to sleep with someone who has more problems than you do, but if in those days I had tried to live by that rule, I would have had no sex life whatsoever, for at twenty-four years old, still a law student, I now see that I hadn't any problems at all. Rose Hess, the girl Pinsker introduced me to, on the other hand, did have a problem or two: she was an alcoholic; she had had tuberculosis; she had two kids living with her mother back in Kentucky; and she was running away from her husband, an unemployed coal miner who had followed her here to Chicago. This last, highly anti-aphrodisiacal fact, which Pinsker had failed to report, clinched it. After two drinks taken in a bar on Diversey, during which all this information poured out, I told Rose Hess how nice it was to meet her and wished her the very best of luck in her new life in Chicago. I walked off into the night, thinking myself well out of it and commending myself on my fundamental good sense. When I arrived at my car, a red and black 1957 Plymouth Belvedere with push-button drive, I found a note attached to the windshield wiper, which read:

Friend,
I catch you out again with my wife I slice off your pecker.

Sincerely,
Richard C. Hess

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Richard C. Hess's notes were strong on verbs. In the weeks to come, even though I never saw his wife again, I received similar notes informing me that he would "club" my head in, "rip" my heart out, "roast" my eyeballs, and "kick" my ass to the moon if he ever caught me with his wife. Some of these notes were left on my windshield; two—which really gave me the willies—were slipped under the door of my apartment. "I gather he must be a bit paranoid," was Pinsker's considered conclusion when I reported all this to him. The future novelist had begun to arrive at his descriptive powers, for when I asked him if he had ever seen Richard C. Hess, he replied that he had noticed him around the hotel a time or two. "Well, Ira," I asked, "what does he look like?"

"Rather a bruiser," Pinsker replied. "Blond, very sinewy, red-faced, a freshly minted tattoo of a snake and a panther curled round a sword on his right forearm. Overall, I should say that he gives the impression of someone fairly menacing. Otherwise, your standard hillbilly type."

Whether Richard C. and Rose Hess ever got back together, I never discovered. All I can say is that I spent five or six extremely edgy weeks until the notes stopped appearing and I could return to my apartment or go out to my car without my stomach turning over in cold panic fear. Sometime during the middle of this awful period it occurred to me that it must have been Pinsker who told Richard C. Hess who I was and where I lived. A clear case of idle chatter, if ever there was one. Thanks again, Ira, that's another one I owe you.

YET IN the fall of that same year I took a trip down South with Pinsker. I was going into my final year of law school, I had always wanted to see the South and didn't know when I would get another chance, and I didn't care to travel alone. No one else could, or cared to, go. Pinsker, ever the free-lance, suggested himself. What I remember him saying is something like he, too, "would like to take in what Henry Louis Mencken so deftly called 'the Sahara of the Bozart.'" Why did I agree to take Pinsker along? Maybe I didn't want to hurt his feelings by turning him down. Maybe I was attracted by his idea of traveling cheaply by staying at Southern chapters of his fraternity, for during his first year at Iowa Pinsker had become a member of Sigma Alpha Mu, a national Jewish fraternity. "Fools that they are, they will welcome us as brothers in spirit," he told me, with a wink and a nudge. "Melvin, we shall eat like kings and at no cost to ourselves." He rubbed his hands together intensely.

I have not until now mentioned Pinsker's thriftiness. It was extreme. In later years, it was said about him that he was able to save money while living on unemployment insurance. If anyone had ever witnessed him picking up a check, that witness has yet to come forth. On this Southern trip I discovered how extreme his thrift could be. We first stopped in Memphis, at Memphis State University, where it was late at night and we learned that fraternities had no accommodations. I suggested that we sleep cheap by checking into the downtown YMCA. Why not in the car? Pinsker wondered. I preferred not to, but Pinsker, with the obstinacy that led him to run three years' worth of mile races without ever finishing in the money, won out. Large-hearted guy, he gave me the back seat.

Sleeping in the car was damned uncomfortable, but what Pinsker's cheapness led us into next was slightly dangerous. We were sitting on the back veranda of the student union at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, appraising, with heartfelt admiration, the effects of fresh air and physical exercise on that institution's extremely healthy female undergraduate population, when I mentioned that it was nearly time for lunch. At Southern Methodist there was, of course, no SAM chapter, nor any other Jewish fraternity. I thought we might have a sandwich in the student union, and push on. Pinsker had another idea. Why spend good money, he reasoned, when we could pass ourselves off as Sigma Chi's from Iowa and eat on the cuff in the Sigma Chi house at SMU.

It struck me at once as a tremendously bad idea. Neither of us looked remotely like a Sigma Chi. Even then I had to shave twice a day if I was going out in the evening and, as I well remember, I was wearing a white-on-white shirt with French cuffs rolled up to the elbows, a pair of dark gray slacks, and black tassel loafers, and looked every inch the big-city Jewish law student of the late 1950's, which, after all, is what I was. Pinsker, with his rather widely separated eyes, his already receding hairline, and odd clothes—that day he was wearing a shiny maroon windbreaker, a pair of blue corduroys, and black wing-tip shoes—Pinsker looked like someone from another country, or possibly another planet. We were not exactly your two typical Sigma Chi's from Iowa. "Take courage, Melvin," Pinsker declared, "these morons will never know the difference." Since college Pinsker, I thought, had developed a foolhardy contempt for the intelligence of almost everyone but himself.

I don't remember much about how we got past the door of the Sigma Chi house, or how Pinsker was able to evade the rigmarole of exchanging fraternity handshakes and passwords. I do remember him telling a tall, rather well-built kid who met us at the door—he, apparently, was a pledge—that we were Sigma Chi's from the University of Iowa, Alpha Eta chapter, and then introducing me as Roy Peters and himself as Chick Nelson (*Chick Nelson!*—no one in the world looked less like a Chick Nelson than Ira Pinsker. Had I not taken the precaution of removing the mezuzah from around my neck and putting it in my pocket, I would probably have swallowed it at that moment.) Then he said, my friend Chick did, "We're not, I trust, too late for lunch?"

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As we walked through the large living room, through the trophy and chapter rooms, into the dining room, I recall feeling as if I were in some old movie in which Laurel and Hardy are Gypsies who have disguised themselves to pass among the palace guard in order to be able to rescue a beautiful young peasant girl from a malevolent aristocrat. But all that we were rescuing was a small lunch check that Pinsker didn't want to pay. The meal was already in progress. Huge platters of meat loaf and mashed potatoes and green beans were being passed around by muscular, mostly blond, crew-cut college boys. We sat at one of the tables near the entrance. Pinsker introduced us as Sigma Chi's from Alpha Eta chapter. Everyone at the table seemed to be named Bobby or Don or Ray. "What kinda football team you gonna have at Iowa this year, Chick?" one of the Sigma Chi's asked. "I think we are Rose Bowl bound," said Pinsker, "but would you mind passing the meat loaf?"

I had to concede that Pinsker was handling himself fairly well. He was batting small talk around, inventing facts and figures about old Alpha Eta chapter back in Iowa City, and talking up the fraternity's intramural sports successes. Meanwhile, he helped himself to seconds of everything, including two slices of cherry pie. I was about to reconsider slightly my opinion of his hopelessness, when one of the Sigma Chi's at the table asked good buddy Chick what kind of pledge class Alpha Eta was anticipating that fall. "Well," said Pinsker, dabbing a bit of cherry pie from the corner of his mouth with his paper napkin, "we'll be looking as always for as many classics majors as we can find. Also art history majors and philosophers. A fraternity like Sigma Chi can use all the philosophers it can get its hands on." That maniac Pinsker, I thought, now he's done it. I looked to the exits in the room, just in case we had to make a run for it. But the Bobbys and the Dons and the Rays seemed transfixed with incomprehension. Before we left, old Chick got them to have the cook make us up some sandwiches for the road.

We stopped at Austin and Houston and pushed on to New Orleans, where we stayed at the Sigma Alpha Mu house at Tulane. We were to be there only for a day, so I offered to treat Pinsker, who claimed that his funds were running low, to a night on the town. We had dinner at Brennan's, listened to Dixieland at Preservation Hall, sang dirty ditties at Perry O'Brien's, and began a round of the jazz bars. Fairly early in the evening, I made a small discovery: when it came to drinking, Pinsker, though a large man, was a short hitter. Two drinks and he became sleepy; three drinks and his speech began to slur and his eyelids to droop. It was still early in the evening, and though we planned to head back to Chicago at five the next morning, hoping to make the run from New Orleans in one long day's drive, I wasn't quite ready to turn in. So it became a matter of have a drink and drag Ira, have a drink and drag Ira. Until, that is, I made the mistake of going to the men's room at Pete Fountain's, leaving Pinsker at the bar, from which, when I returned, he had disappeared.

I searched up and down the French Quarter, from starkly lit Bourbon Street to dark, slightly eerie Chartres Street. I looked into strip joints, jazz bars, restaurants. No Pinsker. I walked along the Mississippi River, wondering if he had fallen in. Was Pinsker lying at this moment beaten up in some dank back alley? Was he in an emergency room somewhere? Or, who knew, a morgue? It was getting late. I decided to make one more patrol of the main streets of the Quarter. Around three in the morning, at a striptease joint that advertised as its headliner a dancer named Reddi Flame, I found Pinsker, his head on the bar. A rather heavy-set woman wearing only a single-feather headdress and a loincloth, and billed as Princess Cherokee, was dancing to "Night Train" on a small stage behind the bar. I shook Pinsker awake. "Melvin," he said, his thinning hair in disarray, his eyeballs glazed, "I appear to have lost my shoe," and his head fell back onto the bar. I shook him again. He raised his head, looked directly at Princess Cherokee, and announced, loudly and in his emphatic accent, "Gawd! Is she ghastly!" The Princess, not missing a beat, one large breast whirling clockwise, the other counterclockwise, silently mouthed the retort, "I am not."

Somehow I was able to get the one-shoed Pinsker into a cab. I set him on the front porch of the Sigma Alpha Mu house and went upstairs, where among sleeping fraternity boys I gathered up our things. I loaded the Plymouth; then I stuffed Pinsker into the back seat. An eight-hundred-mile drive to Chicago, where in thirty or so hours I was to begin my last year of law school, lay ahead. Well, thanks to my old friend Pinsker, we were getting a somewhat early start.

The sun beat down as I drove through Mississippi. Near the border of Tennessee, I began to feel my lack of sleep. I stopped for coffee, for cokes, for gas, during which time I ran cold water over my wrists in gas-station rest rooms. Pinsker snored gently all this while in the back of the Plymouth; there was a hole in the sock on the foot from which he had lost his black wing-tip. I cannot say that I longed sorely for his company. But neither did I think I could go on much farther, for, despite all the coffee, coke, cold water, I began dozing at the wheel. Outside Memphis, I decided to wake Pinsker.

I had not thus far on this long trip asked Pinsker to drive a single mile, and for the good reason that his driving frankly terrified me. He had a natural antipathy to activities calling for normal human coordination. He was the only person I ever saw who, when he shuffled a deck of cards, made you feel rather sorry for the

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cards. Ira was a youthful Mr. Magoo, but without the cartoon character's terrible eyesight. He had a fine obliviousness, a wildly misplaced confidence, that could be amusing in minor activities. But driving was something else again. I didn't want Pinsker driving my Plymouth, but there wasn't time for me to pull over to the side of the road and sleep three or four hours and still get to Chicago for classes the next day. I had no choice.

"Ira," I said, in the most serious tone of voice I could command, "don't drive any more than forty-five, fifty miles an hour—tops! There's no great hurry. Don't take any chances. Don't do anything crazy." Before falling asleep in the front seat beside him, I looked down to the floor on Pinsker's side, where I noted again the missing wingtip. He had brought only the one pair of shoes on this trip.

The next thing I saw was an enormous threshing machine looming up before us—and fast. "Goddamnit, Pinsker!" I shrieked. He was asleep at the wheel, which I grabbed and jerked, hard, to the right, sending the Plymouth skittering off the road, tires screeching. I remember thinking, "I don't want to die with Pinsker so near. Please don't let me die with Pinsker so near." The car turned over, not once but twice, and landed upright. The roof of the Plymouth was ruined, the hood caved in. I had a gash over my right eye that later took nine stitches to close. Pinsker was shaken but uninjured.

Not long after we had extricated ourselves from the car, the man driving the threshing machine, a farmer in overalls and a baseball cap, came running back. Once he saw that neither of us was seriously hurt, he asked which one was doing the driving. I pointed disgustedly to Pinsker. "Well, young man," the farmer said, "that was a mighty fancy piece of driving, mighty fancy indeed." Pinsker's eyes seemed to focus somewhere off in the distance. I saw that he was reinventing what had just happened, with himself in a heroic role. "I gather it was chiefly just good instinct and quick reflexes on my part," he replied, "but I thank you all the same."

Then and there, I should have strangled him.

PINSKER totaled my car, scarred my face, and neglected to say a word in apology. I really had had enough of him to last me a lifetime, so, once back in law school in Chicago, I drifted away. Less than a year later, I passed the bar and went to work for the law firm of Liebman, Goldberger, and Meyers. Two years further down the road, I met and not long afterward married my wife Rochelle. We were living in Skokie, Shelley was pregnant with our daughter Shari, when one day, on my way to acquire a deposition from a client on the near North Side, I stepped into a cab outside our office on LaSalle Street and looked straight into the back of a head I recognized from fifth grade.

"So, Melvin," said Pinsker, not letting his current employment cut in the least into his pomposity, "has life been treating you equably?"

"Can't complain, Ira. How about you?"

Pinsker told me that he had spent a year traveling around in Europe (he babbled something about the splendor of Portuguese wines) and a little more than a year in San Francisco (which he referred to as "the Bay Area"). He was driving a cab during the day and writing short stories at night, which he was beginning to send around to magazines. Most important, in less than two weeks he was going to get married. His parents didn't approve of his future wife's not being Jewish, not to mention the added bonus of his marrying in a Lutheran church, so they wouldn't be showing up at the wedding. He would be pleased, he said, if my wife and I would come; the only other people who would be there were a couple who had grown up in the same town in South Dakota as his wife. I said I wasn't sure if we were free that day—it was a Saturday afternoon—but that, if he would give me his phone number, I would get back to him.

I made the mistake of telling Shelley about Pinsker's forthcoming wedding. I love my wife, and one of the reasons is that she has a good heart, but a good heart, if I may say so, can be a terrific pain in the neck. Shelley not only insisted that we go to Pinsker's wedding—after all, she argued, I would be his only old friend present—but she also decided to make a wedding lunch back at our house after the marriage ceremony. I pleaded with her not to do so; I attempted to get her to understand what Pinsker was really like. In exasperation, I pointed to the scar over my right eye, which had faded but was still fairly distinct:

"See this," I said (actually, I was yelling), "here is what you get when you start up with Ira Pinsker."

"Of course, darling," she said. "Now be sure to tell your friend Ira that lunch here will be planned for 1:30. That ought to give everyone plenty of time to drive over from Cicero."

I've already mentioned Pinsker's saying "I shall" when asked if he would take Linda Francine Fergusson for his lawful wedded wife. The new Mrs. Pinsker did not go so far as to say "I shall" when asked a similar question, but back at our place in Skokie for my wife's wedding lunch, she did demonstrate herself well-matched for marriage to Pinsker. She was tall—maybe 5'10"—with auburn-colored hair, wore large round-rimmed glasses, and had thick ankles, which were accentuated by her tall-girl's habit of wearing flat shoes. She had been an English major at the University of Iowa, where Pinsker had first met her, and all she seemed to want to talk about, even at her own wedding lunch, was art. She was clearly mad about Pinsker; and from time to time during lunch she would gaze upon him lovingly and begin a sentence by saying, "As Ira so beautifully put it the other day

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. . . ," or "In Ira's elegant phrase . . . ," and then she would say something that didn't seem very beautiful or elegant to me, but then maybe I'm not the best guy to judge. Pinsker himself neither blushed nor corrected her.

I suspect that the former Miss Fergusson, of Mobridge, South Dakota, felt that in Pinsker she had latched on to the real thing, a Jewish artist type, a future novelist of great promise, with whom she could ride, well above the crowd, into the stratosphere. Linda Pinsker had as little doubt about Pinsker as Pinsker had about himself, which was none whatsoever. How does the television commercial for Chanel No. 5 perfume go? Ah, yes: Share the fantasy! Pinsker had found a wife who apparently completely shared his. At least he wouldn't be alone any longer. And, I recall thinking at the time, I suppose two could live as unrealistically as one.

Not long after their marriage, the Pinskers moved to New York, where Linda was transferred by the public-relations firm she worked for in Chicago. I had underrated Linda Fergusson Pinsker, for over the next fifteen or so years she rose in her line of work to be one of the powerful vice presidents of one of the largest public-relations firms in Manhattan, and was probably pulling in a couple of hundred grand a year. I learned this from a client of my own who is a public-relations man in Chicago. I learned, too, from Harvey Silvers, that Pinsker's father had died, without father and son patching things up, and that Ira did not come in for the funeral. How Pinsker himself was doing was pretty unclear. No one reported hearing about any books he had written, or seeing his name in magazines, or anything of the kind.

I would occasionally fly into New York on business, but I never called him. Then, about three years ago, our firm acquired as a client the owners of the Chicago franchise of the defunct United States Football League, and I was put on the case, which involved representing our clients' interest in the disbanding of the USFL and which took me into New York for a monthly meeting with other owners and their attorneys. Generally I would fly in and out the same day, but then one time, owing to a snowstorm in the Midwest, all flights to Chicago were canceled. I had a free night in New York on my hands, and I figured, what the hell, why not call Pinsker?

We met in a small French restaurant on the West Side in the 70's. Linda Pinsker looked much the same; perhaps a bit sleeker and more confident. She and Ira had had no children and obviously weren't planning any. I noticed that she no longer remarked on how beautifully or elegantly her husband put things. Pinsker had lost his hair and replaced it with a thick mustache and beard, which took a little getting used to; I couldn't quite get over the resemblance of this now bearded Pinsker to one of those cardboard faces that, when you turned it upside down, became another face. And speaking of face, Pinsker ordered, in French, something that turned out to be the cheek of a young cow. He ate in the continental manner, his fork in his left hand, his knife in his right. His mid-Atlantic accent had become even more emphatic. Yet he was wearing a tweed suit whose jacket had a belt in the back, and his tie had a gravy stain just below the knot.

"So, Melvin," he said, with a slightly condescending smile, "what brings you to Gotham?"

He seemed even a little crazier than I remembered. Eighteen years had passed since he had left Chicago. Near as I could make out, he had accomplished very little. When I asked him what he was doing at present, he chuckled and said, "I currently describe myself as a hack writer. I am at work on a detective story that may or may not have cinematic possibilities. We shall see." And then he said no more about it. Two or three other times during the dinner he similarly hinted at significance, big doings that, he made clear, it wouldn't do to talk further about here. I remembered his old nickname.

Meanwhile, he grilled me about his former tormentors in grade and high school. I was able to report to him that Denny Cook, who had beaten him up on his first day at Clinton School, was now a policeman in Chicago. I had heard that Donnie Olsen, who had thrown a pie at him after graduation from grammar school, was doing very well as a plumbing contractor. When he asked about Harvey Silvers, I don't know exactly why, but I decided not to fill him in on Harvey's divorces and medical problems. "You know Harvey," I said, "same old wild man." Not long afterward the check arrived, and was picked up not by Ira but by Linda Pinsker, who paid it, with the authority of long habit, with an American Express card.

I didn't call Pinsker on subsequent trips to New York. A little of him, now as then, went a long way. But about four weeks ago I received from a New York publisher an announcement that they were about to bring out a brilliant new novel entitled *Marvin's Secret Gardens* by Ira Lyle Pinsker. A note accompanying the announcement informed me that Mr. Pinsker would be in the Chicago area promoting his book two weeks hence. A week later Pinsker himself called.

"Melvin," he began, "I trust you received the announcement about my novel." He would be in town the following Thursday and would be autographing copies of his novel at the main Kroch & Brentano's store on Wabash Avenue in the Loop. He'd appreciate it if I would be there. He also asked me to make sure that Harvey Silvers was there. And, oh, yes, he had a favor he wanted to ask me. He then read over the phone a list of names of other people he would like to have show up and whom he asked me to call. The list included a number of people who, when kids, had put him down, as well as some of the more desir-

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able girls from our high school who in those days wouldn't have anything to do with him.

"Ira," I said, "I haven't seen or heard about most of these people in more than thirty years. Some must have left Chicago. For all I know, some may even be dead."

"Try, Melvin," he said. "It's important. Try."

There were thirty or so names on Pinsker's list, and I wasn't about to call even half of them. I did make sure that Harvey would be there; and I called seven or eight others, some of whom said they would try. "So the old Idle Chatterer has really written a book," said Larry Fleischer, who had taken over his father's office-furniture business. "What the hell do you suppose is in it?" I said that I didn't know, never having actually seen a copy.

Kroch's was crowded when I arrived at about a quarter to twelve. Part of the crowd was from the beginning of the lunch rush; but a lot of people were there because that same morning Phil Donahue was autographing copies of a book he had just published. People—most of them women—were on the stairs, clutching copies of Donahue's book, patiently awaiting their turn. Pinsker was on the main floor, sitting at a table on which were piled fifty or sixty copies of *Marvin's Secret Gardens*.

Standing there talking with him was Harvey, in a dark blue velour running suit, a thick gold chain around his neck, his once wavy blond hair now combed to camouflage—not very successfully—his baldness. He must have come directly from the East Bank Club, where he worked out on an exercise regimen since his triple bypass. Pinsker sitting down in his absurdly erect posture was nearly as tall as Harvey standing up. Pinsker was wearing a black knit tie over a plaid shirt and a weirdly light green corduroy jacket over that; half-glasses perched on his nose, his beard seemed to bristle aggressively. Looking at them before they saw me, I smiled and thought, "The old Fox and the old Crow meet once again."

"AH, MELVIN," said the great author as I walked up. "You are here, too. What a pleasing surprise!"

Somehow I didn't have the heart to say, "Come off it, Ira, you horse's ass, you begged me to be here." Instead I picked up a copy of the book, which had a lavender jacket and, on the back, a picture of Ira Lyle Pinsker in a turtleneck sweater and a wide-brimmed Italian-looking hat. As I was shaking Harvey's hand, a woman walked up to the table. She wore butterfly-shaped glasses, her hair was swept up into a high bouffant, and she carried a copy of Phil Donahue's book.

"Are you somebody important?" she asked, looking at Pinsker.

"Perhaps one day I shall be much more important than your friend Mr. Donahue, Madame," *Pinsker replied, without a trace of irony.* "But just now I am a writer, merely, a novelist by trade, who works at his craft to the best of his ability."

"Oh, yeah," said the woman, completely puzzled by what she had just heard, and walked away.

Two or three other people from our high school came in during the forty or so minutes I hung around. During that time Pinsker may have autographed ten or twelve books, which he did with great courtliness and flourish. This was Ira Pinsker's shining hour, Ira had come marching home, Pinsker victorious. Well, let him have joy in it, I thought, when, during a flurry of activity at the table, Harvey pulled me over to the side.

"Thirty-one years later," Harvey said, "and he's still a schmuck. When I first walked in here, you know what he said? He said, 'Harvey Silvers, I had no idea that you were interested in the much-neglected fictive art. How endless are the world's surprises!' Can you believe that yutz? I only wish his old man's Nash were at the curb now, so I could step outside and take another leak in it."

"Are you going to buy the book?" I asked.

"Whaddaya, kiddin' me?" Harvey said.

Before I left, I decided that I probably ought to buy a copy of Pinsker's novel. With his famous cheapness, he was not about to give me one. So I shelled out $17.95, plus tax, and brought my copy of *Marvin's Secret Gardens*, along with my receipt, up to Pinsker to sign.

He opened the book to the first clear page, brushed away a few imaginary flecks of dust, and in a bold hand, in brown ink, wrote,

> To Melvin Rosen,
>
> Without whom none of
> this would have been possible,
>
> Best wishes,
> Ira Lyle Pinsker

What in the hell could that mean? Was Pinsker up to his new trick of hinting at significance where none was to be found? That night, reading his book straight through until I finished it at 2:45 in the morning, I found out.

The full name of the character Marvin in *Marvin's Secret Gardens* is Marvin Rabin. He is roughly my age. He has dark hair, two sisters, grew up in West Rogers Park in a building strikingly like my own, is something of a braggart when it comes to women. He did not, it turns out, go to law but to dental school. He is married and has a daughter. He lived in Skokie during the early years of his marriage, and toward the book's close lives in Highland Park, which as it happens is where my wife and I now live. When Marvin Rabin talks in *Marvin's Secret Gardens* he doesn't, to my ear, sound so much like me as he does like a certain goat with whom I went to grammar and high school, and who went on to write a novel in his early fifties. One more little item about Marvin Rabin—he's homosexual, very very homosexual; is now, was then. The secret gardens of Ira Lyle Pinsker's title refer to Marvin Rabin's—I almost

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wrote Melvin Rosen's—duplicitous homosexual life.

I'm not about to recount the entire goddamn novel, which is narrated by a tall, amazingly suave fellow named Nicholas Pinter, who is a kind of (not very) Jewish Somerset Maugham, but a few scenes might give you something of the book's flavor.

Nick Pinter, whose good looks and urbanity make him naturally successful with women, throws a good-looking Southern girl his old friend Marvin Rabin's way while Rabin is still in dental school. Despite his bragging, Rabin is made out to be a pitiful bumbler, nervous and distracted around women. It turns out that the Southern girl is married, to a Kentucky coal miner who has followed her to Chicago. Rabin, whose taste runs to rough trade, comes on strong with the husband. When the husband beats hell out of Rabin, Nick Pinter knows for the first time that his old school chum is "gay" (the word Pinsker uses throughout the novel).

It's pretty hard not to admire Nick Pinter's tolerance and general strength of character. He's a good friend. He takes his pathetic pal Marvin Rabin on a trip not to the South but through Europe. There's a lot of boring description of architecture and cities. They drink a good deal of wine together, especially in Portugal. One night in Lisbon, Marvin comes on to Nick. Tears flow and a lengthy confession follows, detailing the falsity of Marvin's entire life and ending with his sad proclamation of a long-time love for—right, you got it—the elegant Nicholas Pinter.

This crap goes on for more than 350 pages. Marvin, struggling to lead a straight life once he knows he cannot "have" (Pinsker's word) Nick, marries a woman who I had no trouble telling is meant to be modeled on my own wife. He is forced to live a life of complete deception, wearing disguises to gay bars, picking up rough trade, all the while, as far as anyone (except Nick) knows, conducting the straight middle-class life of a Midwestern dentist. Let me ruin the ending for anyone who might care to read the novel by saying that Marvin Rabin eventually commits suicide, leaving a long letter declaring his love for Nicholas Pinter and giving Pinter power of attorney (my God, can you imagine me doing that?) to watch over the future of his, Rabin's, sadly deceived family. The novel closes with the gallant Pinter ruminating on the unfathomable design of the gods when it comes to human destiny.

I don't read much fiction, but I don't think you have to to know that *Marvin's Secret Gardens* is no Pulitzer Prize-winner. Nor, with all of Pinsker's snobbery, would I guess that it had much chance of becoming a big seller. Still, so ticked off was I when I read it that I had it checked by an expert in our firm to determine if the author of the book couldn't be sued for libel. Nothing I would have liked better than to sue the beard off my old friend Ira.

WHEN I calmed down, which took a few weeks, I began to wonder. Why did Pinsker do it? One possible answer is that he really does think I am queer, despite what I take to be strongly persuasive evidence to the contrary. People these days, as we all know, believe anything. Or it could be that Pinsker didn't think I was queer at all, but thought that making me so would provide him with a good story, and one that would show off the character of Nick Pinter, Pinsker's almost insanely self-deceived picture of himself. Probably the main reason for Pinsker's writing his novel was sheer preening, along with getting in a few good licks at the middle class while demonstrating his own superiority. Another possibility—the one, I admit, I least like to consider—is that Pinsker hates me, has hated me for years, and the writing of *Marvin's Secret Gardens* is nothing more than a long delayed act of revenge.

But revenge for what? Maybe for not protecting him more when we were both boys? Maybe for adding to his humiliation when he was an adolescent? Maybe for not taking him altogether seriously as a man after he had radically changed himself into Ira Lyle Pinsker, the writer? In all these cases, though, there were worse offenders than I. Why didn't Pinsker go after them? Could it be that Pinsker felt I should have known better?

Yet what could I have done? As a boy, Ira Pinsker was awkward and out of it; as a man, he forged a style that led him into a life that was wildly delusional. When you press me on it, yes, I believe I am my brother's keeper. But being Pinsker's keeper? What would that involve? Maybe a good friend would have tried, gently, to divest him of some of his delusions. But even if I had been able to do this, would it have been the correct thing to do? Because of his delusions, Pinsker is, I think, goofy; without them, he would be, I am sure, nothing.

During the few weeks of anger I went through after first reading *Marvin's Secret Gardens*, I thought about calling Pinsker and asking him straight out why he had portrayed me in his novel as he did. But then I thought better of it. If he didn't deny it altogether, I was sure he would only hit me with something like, "Melvin, I am afraid that I am not at liberty to say, at least not just now," or "Melvin, the ways of art are complicated and strange, and, if it is all the same to you, I would rather not go into it."

I try not to think about it. At my age, a man could have a heart attack. There is stress enough in the world. I must remain calm. By now I should know that with Pinsker you can't win. No way—not in this world. Not with Ira L. Pinsker. No way.

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Why Johnny Is Ignorant

Terry Teachout

Does the enormous popular success of books like Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s *Cultural Literacy* prove, as some conservatives claim, that a long-suffering majority is finally venting its disapproval of the way in which America's children are being taught? That this remains an open question is shown by the comparatively lukewarm reception of a more recent book by Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr. entitled *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?: A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature.**

To be sure, this book, which reports in detail on the findings of a test of nearly 8,000 seventeen-year-old students, has been widely noticed. But the frankly conservative recommendations it makes for restructuring the way history and literature are taught in American secondary schools have received much less attention than has the ignorance revealed by the test data themselves. Shocking as this ignorance is to many people, others—including a growing number of educators—are not disturbed by it at all. Nor are most politicians, despite the lip-service currently being paid to the goals and methods of the educational-reform movement.

This proposition may seem improbable, even fantastic. How could anyone who calls himself an educator rest content with leaving America's seventeen-year-olds as ignorant of history and literature as this test shows them to be? Under what conceivable circumstances could a politician get away with endorsing such an outrageous situation? To answer these questions, one must begin by taking a closer look at the research findings described in *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*

The First National Assessment of History and Literature is an outgrowth of the longstanding interest in educational reform that led Diane Ravitch of Columbia University and Chester Finn, currently with the U.S. Department of Education, to found the Educational Excellence Network, a group designed "to bring together educators and scholars committed to school improvement."

As a result of their work with the Educational Excellence Network, Ravitch and Finn

> became deeply disturbed about the condition of history and literature in the schools. We learned of schools where history was taught topically, without regard to chronology, and others where history had been replaced by unrelated courses in the social sciences; where literature had given way to coaching for basic skills proficiency tests; where the time for these subjects had been continually whittled away by electives, vocational courses, computer study, and other such subjects.

Most educational idealists respond to such realizations either by leaving the profession or writing book-length exposés. While Ravitch and Finn have written their share of books about educational reform, they decided to try something different this time. Substantial anecdotal evidence had long pointed to a considerable decline in knowledge of the humanities among American students, but no systematic assessment in this area had ever been undertaken. Ravitch and Finn therefore came to the sensible conclusion that what was needed was a nationwide survey of what high-school students knew about history and literature.

The fact that such a survey had not been undertaken long before is startling. But, as Ravitch and Finn point out, it was rare for anyone to speak out on behalf of history and literature in the early days of the current educational-reform movement. Though back-to-basics spokesmen were far from shy in their advocacy of the purely utilitarian gains possible through better teaching of mathematics and science, the case was more difficult to make with the humanities:

> At a time when reshaping the curriculum was high on the agenda of almost every state legislature, those who might have been forceful proponents of history and literature in the schools were unable to articulate why it was important for students to learn these subjects, just as they had earlier failed to defend history and literature against distortion into amorphous courses in social studies and language arts.

Ravitch and Finn approached the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federal project which tests American students in such subjects as reading, literacy, mathematics, and science, and persuaded it to participate in a nationwide assessment of what seventeen-year-olds know about history and literature. The National Endowment for the Humanities provided funding for the assessment, a panel of educational experts drafted the questions, and a 262-item multiple-choice test was administered to a

Terry Teachout *is a member of the editorial board of the New York* Daily News.

* Foreword by Lynne V. Cheney, Harper & Row, 293 pp., $15.95.

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national sample of 7,812 students in early 1986.

WHAT were the results? On the history portion of the test, the national average was 54.5 percent correct; on the literature portion, the national average was 51.8 percent correct. Only 15 of the 141 history questions were answered correctly by at least 80 percent of the students, while of the 121 literature questions, fully a dozen elicited correct answers from fewer than 25 percent of the students. "Observers looking for the bright side," Ravitch and Finn write,

> might suggest that the proverbial glass is half full, rather than half empty. Another way to characterize these results, however, is in the terms traditionally used by teachers . . . this nationally representative sample of eleventh-grade students earns failing marks in both subjects. A few do exceptionally well; the great majority do not. So long as our schools are expected to educate all of our youngsters, not just the best and brightest, then the results of this assessment are cause for serious concern.

Exactly what is it that our eleventh-graders do not know? About 60 percent of them do not know who wrote *Leaves of Grass*. About 57 percent of them do not know that the proverbs "A penny saved is a penny earned" and "A small leak will sink a great ship" come from *Poor Richard's Almanack*. About 60 percent do not know that the purpose of *The Federalist Papers* was to "gain ratification of the United States Constitution." And about 75 percent do not know that Thomas Hardy wrote *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. (One student in five thinks that Oscar Wilde wrote these books.)

The designers of the test went to considerable trouble to incorporate material dealing with black and women's literature. But black students scarcely did better with questions about black writers than with literary questions in general, while girls "perform only marginally better on simple questions drawn from women's history than the boys do."

The recommendations made by Ravitch and Finn are precisely the kind of thing that has been turning up in educational-reform platforms ever since Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, then chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, brought out his controversial 1984 *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education*. "Chronology must be recognized as a basic organizing concept in the study of history." "Enliven the study of history by the frequent use of narratives, journals, stories, biographies, and autobiographies." "Publishers of readers for schools should include a generous proportion of important literary works among their selections." "A hefty dose of good literature should be part of all students' English studies." All correct and all obvious—on the surface.

Nevertheless, these recommendations are not likely to be embraced any time soon, if only because, with regard to the study of literature, there is still so much resistance to what Ravitch and Finn call "the established literary curriculum" of "major works by renowned British and American writers," or what is generally known among academics as "the literary canon." And the same, *mutatis mutandis*, is true of the study of history.

In literature, dissatisfaction with the canon has been voiced for the past twenty years or so by a wide variety of people, among them blacks, feminists, and advocates of the contemporary. The net result of their efforts to update and broaden the canon, however, has not been "a reconstruction of the mix of classic and contemporary works and authors" but something entirely different:

> Once the traditional curriculum lost its authority, and there was no consensus about which authors and titles were truly outstanding, the only remaining source of authority for the "language arts" field was the research of reading experts, which yielded technical rather than literary standards for what students ought to read. . . . At the precollegiate level, the substitutes for works by the likes of George Eliot, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Ralph Waldo Emerson were a new genre of realistic melodrama known as "young adult fiction," biographies of current sports stars and other celebrities, and stories written to fit readability formulas, thereby restricting the use of long sentences, polysyllabic words, and uncommon terms.

IN RECENT years, moreover, the original emphasis on expanding the canon has given way to the more radical proposals of "those who on principle [oppose] the very idea of a canon, regardless of its contents or its capaciousness." Thus "many college professors around the country," reports Joseph Berger in the New York *Times*,

> are rethinking the very notion of what is literature. There are those who continue to uphold a traditional standard of literary quality, arguing that students should essentially read works whose merit has been established over the years. But there is a rising number who contend the idea of an enduring pantheon of writers and their works is an elitist one largely defined by white men who are Northeastern academics and critics.
>
> Choosing between Virginia Woolf and Pearl Buck, they hold, involves political and cultural distinctions more than aesthetic ones.
>
> "It's no different from choosing between a hoagy and a pizza," said Houston Baker, professor of literature at the University of Pennsylvania. "I am one whose career is dedicated to the day when we have a disappearance of those standards."

One index of the intensity of current opposition to the canon can be found, paradoxically, in the pages of E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*, a book which has widely been interpreted as proposing a common core of knowledge but which in fact carefully makes its obeisances to the other side. Thus Hirsch categorically rejects "the assumption that I must be advocating a list of great books that every child in the land should be forced to read," confidently asserting elsewhere that "accumulated wisdom about human nature [is] found in all civilized traditions, East and

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West, ancient and modern, popular and aristocratic."

Ravitch and Finn, by contrast, are unwilling to dismiss the notion that some books are better than others. Indeed, they go so far as to name seventy-six authors whose works constitute "a strong core curriculum" of "literature that has survived the passage of time, that is frequently referred to by other authors, and that therefore serves as a partial basis for communication among literate people." Still, even they are unwilling to offer this list "as a mandate about what ought to be read by students in the future." This hesitancy notwithstanding, the authors of *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?* do manage to make clear their conviction that the desperate condition of the humanities in America's public schools is the result not merely of a conscious decision on the part of the educational establishment to emphasize skills over content but of an equally conscious abdication of responsibility on the part of educators afraid to offend the influential enemies of the canon.

What these enemies want goes far beyond adding authors like Virginia Woolf or James Baldwin to the required-reading lists of high-school English courses. What they are after is nothing less than to erase the values of Western culture from the minds of the young by deliberately failing to introduce them to the history and literature in which those values are embodied. Thus, when a group of minority students and radical faculty members (led, significantly, by Jesse Jackson) marched in protest against Stanford University's freshman course in Western culture, they chanted: "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture's got to go." And so it will if, as seems increasingly likely, such forces continue getting their way against the efforts of responsible educators like Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn.

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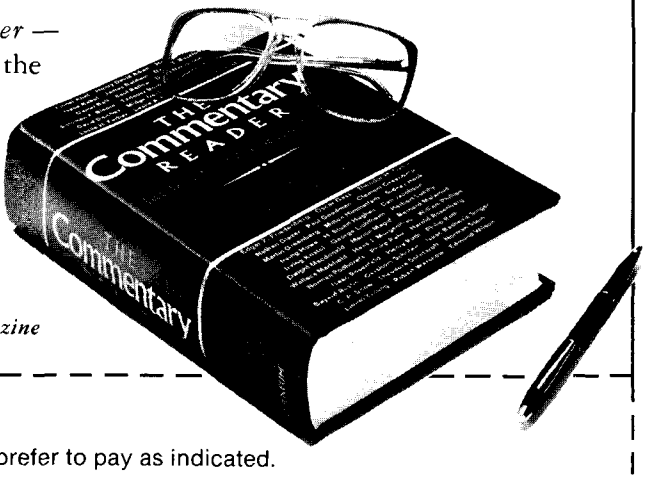

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Books in Review

Death in Athens

THE TRIAL OF SOCRATES. By I.F. STONE. *Little, Brown. 282 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by DONALD KAGAN

THERE is something charming in seeing someone begin the study of ancient languages and literature late in life after a very different career devoted to practical and current worldly business. So it is said to have been with the elder Cato, Censor of the Roman republic, who, we are told, began the study of Greek as an old man. In the same way I.F. Stone, socialist and journalist, turned to the study of Greek and the Greeks when ill health forced him to stop publishing *I.F. Stone's Weekly* after almost two decades of leftist criticism of American society. He was led to the ancient Greeks by his plan to write a history of the freedom of thought; he hoped that such a work would help to preserve free speech where it exists and also "to help embattled dissidents in the Communist world find their way to a liberating synthesis of Marx and Jefferson."

Anyone who hopes to find a basis for liberty in Marx is just the man to seek the answers to problems that have eluded solution for more than two thousand years, and one of these emerges from the condemnation of Socrates in the year 399 B.C.E. on the charge of impiety and of corrupting the youth of Athens. "How," asks Stone, "could the trial of Socrates have happened in so free a society? How could Athens have been so untrue to itself?" This book is his attempt to answer those questions and "to mitigate the city's crime and thereby remove some of the stigma the trial left on democracy and Athens." Stone's strategy has two parts: first, to show that Athens was totally committed to free speech and did not normally place any check on it, and, therefore, that the trial of Socrates was a singular aberration which might be explicable, if finally not justifiable; secondly, to demonstrate that Socrates was primarily responsible for his own condemnation.

The Athenian democracy has had the deserved reputation ever since antiquity of placing the greatest importance on and giving the broadest latitude to freedom of speech for its citizens. In spite of that, ancient traditions report various punishments meted out to famous intellectuals such as Anaxagoras, Protagoras, and Euripides. Stone devotes an entire chapter to denying the accuracy of these reports, pointing out that they came from doubtful sources written long after the events they purport to describe. Nothing in his arguments is new; he chiefly rehearses one side of a scholarly quarrel that has gone on for more than a century. Having digested the evidence, most classical scholars still believe in the condemnation of at least some of the artists and thinkers mentioned by the ancient writers.

Quite apart from these cases, however, there is good evidence that the Athenian democracy found it necessary to limit the freedoms of its intellectuals from time to time. There seems little doubt that Phidias, the master sculptor, planner of the temples of the Acropolis, and personal friend of Pericles, was banished on a combined charge of peculation and impiety. We are told, moreover, that on one occasion a law was passed that barred Athenian comedy, which normally throve on satirical treatment of contemporary Athenians, especially politicians, from portraying live people. The ban was soon withdrawn.

These are merely examples of brief lapses in moments of fear, danger, or political conflict from a generally high standard of tolerance, but they show that the treatment of Socrates was not so singular as Stone supposes. He labors so hard to make his case because of a belief in a mythical Athens that could not resist an appeal to the right of free speech. Had Socrates made such an appeal instead of the defense he offered, says Stone, "he would have struck a deep and responsive chord."

Let us leave until later a discussion of Socrates's defense. The point to be made here is that the real Athens put significant limits on the exercise of freedom of speech, especially in the political arena. Checks on intellectuals were sporadic and temporary; limits on political speech were built into the constitution and of long duration. For almost a century from the invention of the democracy, the Athenians employed the institution called ostracism, whereby each year one citizen could be exiled for ten years, without trial, without, indeed, any charge brought against him. Almost all the victims of ostracism were leading politicians; their removal from Athens amounted to a rather effective deprivation of their right to speak freely there on political or any other questions.

Still another check was on the freedom to speak in the Athenian assembly. In the second half of the 5th century a law was enacted to the effect that a speaker in the assembly could be brought to trial on the charge of making an illegal proposal. This charge, the *graphe paranomon*, could be brought at once, but it could also be delayed for an indefinite time into the future. This law could not have failed to have a chilling effect on at least some speakers.

THUS the real Athens was a more complex place than is understood by I.F. Stone. Still, there have been few people in history, if any, who have held as high an opinion of freedom of speech as the Athenians. Why, then, did they prosecute occasional intellectuals for using it and arm themselves with such powerful weapons against it? The answer is that the real Athenian democracy was faced at various times

DONALD KAGAN *is Richard M. Colgate Professor of History and Classics at Yale. His most recent book is* The Fall of the Athenian Empire, *the fourth and final volume of his history of the Peloponnesian War.*

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by real enemies, external and internal.

The fledgling democracy founded shortly before 500 B.C.E. was threatened immediately by the armies of Sparta and its allies from the outside and by potential traitors within. The Persian invasion that was defeated at Marathon was led by an Athenian traitor, and the campaign's strategy was based on the expectation of treason within the city. Again, during the Peloponnesian War the enemies of democracy plotted treason, this time successfully. The leaders of the coup, and especially the young aristocrats who did the dirtiest work, had listened for years to radical intellectuals who questioned the fundamental principles and assumptions of the Athenian democratic society, its religion, its civic beliefs, its patriotism, its insistence that its citizens exercise their individualism in accordance with the needs of the polity and not to its detriment. Such men could speak of the traditional democracy as "acknowledged foolishness," especially when compared with theoretical and utopian regimes they had been taught to admire.

The oligarchy established in 411 lasted only four months. An even nastier and tighter oligarchic regime, the "Thirty Tyrants," set up with Spartan support after the war, was also short-lived. An amnesty was passed to prevent civil strife, but many Athenians looked back bitterly on these attacks on their democracy and on the men responsible for them. They could not fail to notice that Alcibiades, once very close to Socrates, was the originator of the first oligarchic coup. At least once a traitor and twice an exile to escape prosecution, he it was who had told the Spartans that democracy was "acknowledged foolishness." Nor did they forget that it was Socrates who urged Charmides, one of the Thirty, to enter political life. Finally, they knew that Critias, the bloodthirsty leader of the Thirty, had also associated with Socrates.

Socrates himself was certainly no friend of democracy. He regularly questioned and ridiculed a system of government by mass meeting, most of whose officials were chosen by lot. He appears to have preferred the far less democratic mixed constitution of Sparta, but there can be no question that he would have treated that constitution as roughly had he been a Spartan, and so would he have dealt with any other constitution wherever he lived.

THE crucial fact is that he was a philosopher, not a politician. He appears to have believed in some kind of transcendental knowledge that could be arrived at through unaided human reason. The route to that knowledge was through an unending process of questioning, and inevitably undermining, received opinion, which in Athens was predominantly democratic. Religion and customary practice were much older than the democracy, but by 399 that regime was more than a century old, in most people's view "the ancestral constitution" which was seen to rest on the older traditions. Philosophers, scientists, rhetoricians, inquirers, and teachers of all sorts, raising difficult questions about everything, excited and influenced rich young men who could pay their fees. These young men could easily be persuaded that the beliefs of the uneducated masses were nonsense and that a government that rested on such beliefs and ignored their special claims to influence and power was absurd and wrong. Socrates's erstwhile pupil, the monstrous Critias, wrote that religion and the gods were merely the inventions of clever men to make the masses well-behaved and law-abiding through fear of divine punishment.

Socrates did not teach for pay and did not engage in scientific speculation, deny the existence of the gods, or deny the validity of law, even in a democratic state. To the ordinary Athenian, however, these differences were trivial. They knew that he questioned everything, provided no answers, and left his interlocutors looking and feeling silly, unable to justify their traditions, beliefs, and actions. To them Socrates, even more than the others, was undermining the elements that underlay their constitution and state. Such was the tolerance of the Athenians that they took no action against him until he was seventy, and even then the amnesty prevented them from making the complaints that were most on their minds.

STONE knows all this but focuses on the ways in which Socrates offended the democracy as opposed to the society in general. He denied the assumptions of democracy by regarding human beings in society as a herd in need of a shepherd; by insisting that good government required leaders who have true knowledge and could not arise from the ignorant opinions of the masses; and by withdrawing from political life and urging others to do the same, while democratic theory required the participation of all citizens. Stone further emphasizes that Socrates, though himself of humble origins, was a snob who held the common Athenian in contempt. All of this is meant to palliate and explain, though not excuse, the behavior of the Athenians in condemning Socrates. Plato, we are told, "carried on the same intellectual assault against Athenian freedom and democracy that his master [Socrates] launched. . . ." "It was the political, not the philosophical or theological, views of Socrates that finally got him into trouble."

This is a vulgarly reductionist explanation of the behavior of the Athenians that badly mistakes the more complex reality. Socrates was surely right when he told his judges that more than the men who brought him to trial in 399 he feared his earlier accusers, those who said that "there is a man called Socrates, a wise man, a student of all things in the sky and below the earth, who makes the worse argument the stronger. Those who spread that rumor, gentlemen, are my dangerous accusers, for their hearers believe that those who study these things do not even believe in the gods." Stone's prejudice is that hostility to democracy is the worst of crimes, one that extenuates the violation of an individual's freedom, while the undermining of the religious and other traditions does not. The Athenians held an opposite view.

Stone's main defense of the Ath-

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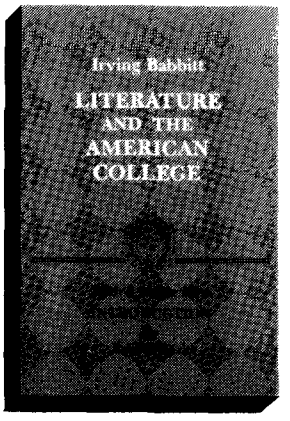

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enians, however, is that Socrates need not have died at all had he chosen to defend himself properly. Instead, he deliberately provoked his judges by refusing to make an effective defense and by refusing to propose an acceptable alternative punishment when he was convicted. He chose to die when the Athenians merely wanted him to be quiet or to go into exile. Stone suggests that he chose to lose, when he might have won acquittal, out of a vindictive hatred for the Athenian democracy. Had he pleaded his case as a 20th-century civil libertarian he would have succeeded, but "his victory would also have been a victory for the democratic principles he scorned. An acquittal would have vindicated Athens." So, we are to believe, he preferred to die.

Stone is not the first, only the least persuasive, to try to excuse the Athenians by considering Socrates's death a form of judicial suicide. It is necessary to repeat that Socrates was not a politician but a philosopher. The notion that he wanted to die in order to spite the democracy and make himself a martyr to the anti-democratic cause is ludicrous. If there was any martyrdom intended it was in behalf of philosophy and the freedom to seek the truth by inquiry.

In fact, a Socrates true to himself had no choice but to act as he did. He could not argue for entirely unrestrained free speech as a general principle because he agreed with his judges that it could be a threat to the existing order, a risk he was glad to run. He could only assert for himself that his own character and destiny required him to continue his inquiries, whatever the cost. The Athenian democracy was right to see the danger he presented to it but wrong to prosecute and execute him, not only because the toleration even of speech dangerous to its own existence is part of the nature of democracy, but also because suppression of ideas is impossible in a democratic state. Democracies must defend themselves against subversion not by trying to suppress the expression of hostile and dangerous opinions but by providing effective answers to the attacks and by defending the traditions that underlie their polities.

I.F. Stone's defense of the Athenian democracy will not work, but it is easy to perceive his agony in making the attempt. He detests Socrates's hostility to democracy, yet he identifies with his position as the lonely critic of a flawed society, a bold and independent gadfly pointing the way to a truer and better understanding than his fellow citizens'. His own glory days were in the 1940's and 1950's when, more than now, the American democracy rested on the traditions of patriotism and free enterprise. Quite consistently his writings tended to undermine those values. Though he sometimes criticized the Soviet Union, he attacked every American attempt to resist Soviet expansion and the spread of Communist tyranny, regularly questioning the decency of American motives and accusing the U.S. of imperialism and warmongering.

Thus in December 1946, when the enslavement of Eastern Europe was a *fait accompli* and Stalin's evil intentions blatant, a committee of the House of Representatives recommended an increase in the industrial production of West Germany and restrictions on trade with the Soviet Union. Stone wrote that "the old familiar Nazi line of the need to strengthen the Reich as a bulwark against Bolshevism reappears . . . and it reappears in a context suggesting that America's principal postwar concern is preparation for a third world war, this time against the USSR." He denounced the doctrine of containment and asserted that the only danger was from the inherent expansionist tendencies of capitalism and from the militarism and repression to which it turned as a device to resist depression or socialism.

"But the trend toward socialism," he wrote in 1947, "is irresistible, though atom bombs level everything from Moscow to Vladivostok, though the palest pinks of Washington are immured in Alaskan hoosegows. This is the handwriting on the 20th-century skies. This is the future. The American capitalist would be wise to recognize it and contain himself. This is the 'containment' we need for world peace."

Four decades later, when predicted great depressions have failed to come to pass, when the peoples of the Western democracies have achieved a level of prosperity, freedom, and democracy unexampled, when the tyranny of Communism has produced no compensating prosperity but only economic decay, when the Chinese Communists have turned to free enterprise to solve their problems and their Soviet counterparts are trying to find a way to do the same, when socialism is "acknowledged foolishness" to all but the faithful true believers who do not have to experience it, all this may seem merely dated nonsense. But I.F. Stone was an admired godfather of the New Left. America's gilded youth of the 1960's took their picture of America from him and others who shared his views. Safe in the shelter of their universities, they behaved much like the Nazi mobs that destroyed the Weimar Republic.

Stone regretted their excesses: "I do not like much of what they are saying and doing. I do not like to hear opponents shouted down, much less beaten up. I do not like to hear any one group or class, including policemen, called pigs. I do not think four-letter words are arguments. I hate, *hate*, intolerance and violence." He hated it, but he excused it, for he felt "that the New Left and the black revolutionists . . . are doing God's work." So Stone, too, like Socrates, finds justification for his behavior in the will of God, but he lacks Socrates's consistency. To him freedom of speech is sacred, but its suppression by the New Left is justifiable. Socrates, moreover, never defended the Alcibiadeses and Charmideses and Critiases who attacked the democracy he scorned, but Stone defends the bullies who trample the principle he professes to revere.

Socrates resisted the mob on several difficult occasions and throughout his life. Stone's finest hours were in the years he resisted the mob stirred to misbehavior by the deranged bully Joseph McCarthy. For this he suffered no harm what-

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soever, in considerable part because he made his living from a capitalist enterprise of which he was the proprietor. Within a very few years the despicable McCarthy was gone. The Athenians in a moment of inexplicable fear, fury, or vengeance, killed their critic, Socrates. America, on the other hand, has rewarded I.F. Stone with prosperity and admiration verging on reverence. Let us hope he has many more healthy years to study the ancients and moderns and to contemplate the paradox.

Hymn to Freud

A GODLESS JEW: FREUD, ATHEISM, AND THE MAKING OF PSYCHOANALYSIS. By PETER GAY. *Yale University Press, in association with Hebrew Union College Press. 182 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by WILFRED M. MCCLAY

AS ANYONE acquainted with his work knows, Peter Gay is an enthusiastic partisan of the Enlightenment. From earliest writings, he has consistently championed the rational disenchantment of the world, and looked to the likes of Voltaire and Diderot, Feuerbach and Marx, and above all, Sigmund Freud, as his ancestral heroes. And there is something to be said for this stance, when it is taken in moderation and modesty, for it can foster a healthy resistance to the fashionable irrationalisms that periodically afflict even advanced minds. As a refugee (albeit a very young one) from the Nazis, Gay has been understandably preoccupied with the dangers that can result from the wanton abandonment of reason. Skepticism, as Santayana once remarked, is the chastity of the intellect; and chastity, as we are now rediscovering, is not always a bad thing. If the skeptic must forgo, for a time, the sweet pleasures of surrender, he can at least protect himself from a host of unforeseen and untoward consequences.

Yet the heart too has its reasons, and a wise skepticism must also be skeptical of itself. Otherwise it is liable to be unaware of dogmas creeping up the back stairway, and may end up yielding its virtue to some imposing conquistador, out in the embarrassing publicity of the fire escape. This latest of Peter Gay's books, based upon a series of lectures he delivered in 1986 at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, is a case in point. It is nothing less than a true believer's full-throated hymn to Sigmund Freud, paying tribute to the singular courage, as Gay would have it, with which Freud unflinchingly pressed the implications of the scientific *Weltanschauung* to their logical conclusion, and brushed aside the pathetic collective delusion called "religion" along the way. Only an atheist, Gay argues, could have liberated his consciousness sufficiently to con-

WILFRED M. MCCLAY, *a new contributor, is an assistant professor of history at Tulane University.*

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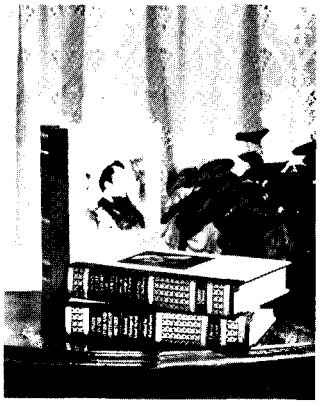

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ceive the ultimate science of psychoanalysis; and because psychoanalysis *is* science, its truths are absolute, universal, and superhistorical, all the way down to the most arcane cathartic detail. As for Freud's personal background, it was valuable to him only insofar as his sense of social marginality as a Viennese Jew placed him "in opposition" to the status quo; otherwise, it played an insignificant role in the origins of psychoanalysis.

Readers of Gay's previous hymns to Freud will find all this pretty familiar. But one wonders what the young theological students in his audience felt as they listened, very politely no doubt, to these thoughts. Perhaps they were thinking about going into another line of work. "The historical tension between science and religion," Gay remarks promisingly in his preface, is "far more intricate" than most observers have realized; but in the pages that follow, under the title "Science Against Religion," his argument could not be simpler. The relationship between science and religion is that between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, health and neurosis. To make sure we get the point, Gay crowns Freud "the last *philosophe*," thus explicitly linking him, and psychoanalysis, to the debunking, anticlerical, scientistic, and wholly secular tradition he champions. In the hands of another writer, one might think that the choice of the adjective "last" reflected a historian's sense of the Enlightenment's historicity; but in Gay's case, it reflects a belief that we are now living in the age of ultimate truths. No new *philosophes* need apply.

THERE is much wrong with this unsubtle argument, which reads in places like a gloss on the Scopes trial. To begin with, it must hold out of account the many distinguished scientists who have openly professed their belief in God; apparently these poor souls do not really understand their business. And it relies upon a distinctly 19th-century view of science, a view that has become more and more problematic with each passing year; one thinks, for example, of the revolutionary implications of developments in post-Newtonian subatomic physics, implications we have barely begun to absorb. And it is, in the end, unhelpful to talk about a scientific *Weltanschauung*, since there is no way instrumental reason can speak to us about the ends by which we ought to live, only the means we use to achieve them. Yet even if we set aside these initial misgivings, and agree for the time being to step aboard the leaking and listing vessel of 19th-century scientism, we immediately run into other serious difficulties.

Perhaps the foremost of these is Gay's contention, reiterated again and again, without qualifications and without irony, that psychoanalysis is a science. One would never suspect from reading Gay's book that Freud and his creation have in recent years come under a withering assault emanating from such scholars as Henri Ellenberger, Adolf Grünbaum, Frank Sulloway, and Frederick Crews, the last of whom has argued that "psychoanalysis is not appreciably different in epistemic rigor from the reading of tea leaves." Amazingly enough, the names of these authors and their books do not even appear in Gay's bibliography, let alone his text. Instead, Gay rehearses in loving detail the very same filiopietistic image of Freud that these formidable critics have discredited almost beyond repair. Perhaps he shows a certain short-term tactical savvy in ignoring challenges rather than confronting them, but one is hard put to reconcile such tactics with the candid spirit of science.

Indeed, the strategy of claiming psychoanalysis as pure and indubitable science—and doing so by loud and confident assertion—is a counterproductive one, for it raises the stakes to a point where nothing useful can survive the inevitable unmasking. It would be far better, and more honest, to put psychoanalysis forward as a valuable model, one among many that have sometimes proved useful in the hands of skilled and sensitive practitioners, but one without privileged ontological access to the tangled reality of the human soul. Otherwise, psychoanalysis should be submitted to the sort of controlled, public, and replicable testing of falsifiable hypotheses that real scientists engage in, and its therapeutic efficacy (and cost-effectiveness) judged by its record. But it will not do to perpetuate the high-handed combination of bullying and mystification by which the claim of "science" continues to be advanced—as, for example, in the self-fulfilling idea that the world's "resistance" to psychoanalysis only serves to demonstrate the doctrine's veracity.

ANOTHER troubling aspect of Gay's book involves the sort of evidence he uses as an intellectual historian. Quite simply, the ultimate authority offered for any question involving the historical origins of psychoanalysis is always Freud himself. No one else matters. Somehow questions of biography, of historical context, and of unintended consequences, questions which affect the thought of lesser mortals—questions which Gay has put to his evidence in previous writings, often with distinguished results—are irrelevant to the consideration of Freud. It is as if Freud were immaculately conceived, and stood outside of intellectual history and all its petty conditioning forces.

Again, it seems an unfortunate error to attempt a rescue of what is valuable in Freud by claiming an implausible heroism for him; in science as in politics, full disclosure is the order of the day. One need not be very psychologically inclined to recognize that there is more to a man's thought than what he himself is aware of, no matter how intelligent he is. And one need not roll in the heavy artillery of reader-response criticism to recognize that Freud's historical significance hinges on the way other people have reacted to him and used him, and not exclusively on his assorted pronouncements about himself.

None of these considerations slows down Gay. On the question of the possible "common ground" between psychological science and religion, for example, the efforts of William James, Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, and others matter for naught, because *Freud asserted* that *there could be no common ground*. Case closed. On the difficult question of what Freud's Jewishness

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may have contributed to his thought, only Freud's testimony truly matters; the rest is idle speculation. As for the claims that psychoanalysis is pseudoscience, this is definitively resolved by Freud's assertion that he *is* a scientist. As for the unconscious determinants that might have helped make Freud into the figure he became, we are treated to the functional equivalent of an eighteen-and-a-half-minute tape-gap. Freud's love of science stemmed from his professed view of nature as a beneficent mother, and his inability to stop feuding with an ever-growing list of enemies reflected (as he *himself* observed, of course) the fact that he worked best in an atmosphere of tension. God save us from such shocking revelations.

PERHAPS Gay will deal more fully and forthrightly with these questions in his forthcoming biography of Freud. Perhaps he will answer, in a point-by-point way, the damaging criticisms made by Crews, Sulloway, *et al.* Perhaps he will complicate this Parson Weems-like portrait of the Master who cannot abide an untruth, and explain Freud's apparently unscrupulous behavior in, for example, the Emma Eckstein case, or his cocaine-evangelism stage, to name but two complications. Perhaps he will explain why, if we are to believe everything Freud said, we should not believe his famous admission that he was "not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker," but rather "nothing but a *conquistador*, an adventurer." Perhaps. But in the meantime, good skeptics—those who believe, with Diderot, that in matters of science "everything must be examined"—would be well advised to lock their windows and keep an eye on the back stairs. Sometimes it is better to be chaste than sorry.

Dynasty

THE FORDS: AN AMERICAN EPIC. By PETER COLLIER and DAVID HOROWITZ. *Summit Books. 496 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by CARTER COOPER

CHRONICLES of great 20th-century American families tend to fall into two divided camps: on the one side, foot-stomping denunciations of the depredations and corruptions of the powerful; on the other, and these days far less common, side, saccharine, flowery treatments that are often the work of kept biographers. Peter Collier and David Horowitz, in lively chronicles of the Rockefellers, the Kennedys, and now the Fords, have avoided both pitfalls.

Balzac said, famously, "Behind

CARTER COOPER *is assistant editor of the* Public Interest.

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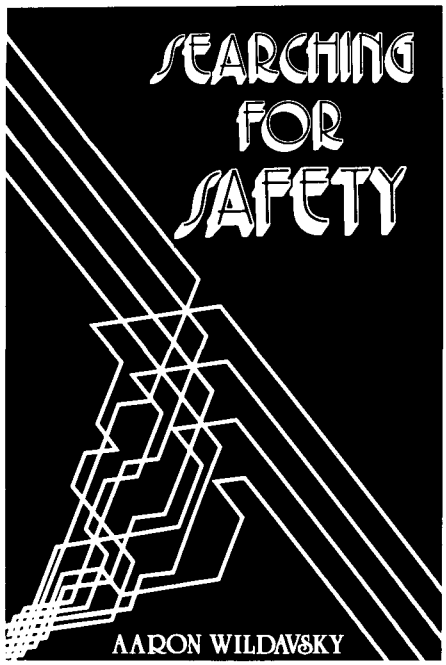

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every great fortune there is a great crime." But for the Fords, the authors contend, the fortune came first and then the crimes. Perhaps this is why the first Ford, Henry, a diligent, persistent, mechanically adept, runaway farm boy, who would become the richest man in America, escaped in the early days of his celebrity the hotheaded condemnations meted out to the other great capitalists by muckrakers and politicians.

Unlike John D. Rockefeller and Jay Gould, the hated "malefactors of great wealth," whose fortunes were born in sometimes murky circumstances, Ford made his by bringing to the ordinary American a machine that transformed daily life and in so doing helped to break down the strictures of class and geography. The *Nation* praised Ford as "a man who not long ago was a simple mechanic, who has no recourse to combination or manipulation or oppression or extortion, who has simply offered his wares to a public eager to buy them and distanced his competitors by no other art than that of turning out his product by more perfect or more economical methods than they have been able to devise or execute." Even so unlikely a friend to capitalism as the radical journalist John Reed gushingly described the automaker as a "slight boyish figure with thin, long sure hands unceasingly moving . . . the fine skin of his thin face browned by the sun; [with] the mouth and nose of a simpleminded saint."

Henry Ford's vision, which won him such acclaim, was deceptively plain. "I will build a motorcar for the multitude," he announced. "It will be large enough for the family but small enough for the individual to run and care for. It will be constructed of the best materials, by the best men to be hired, after the simplest designs that modern engineering can devise. But it will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to buy one."

With the help of a collection of highly capable associates, one of whom, Charles Sorensen, hit upon the idea of the assembly line, Ford built his factory at Highland Park, Michigan in 1910, turning out the Model T at a furious rate. By 1914 Ford had manufactured half the nation's automobiles. With the opening of the Rouge River Plant in 1920—an enormous industrial city employing some 42,000 workers—production expanded even further. Mass production lowered the price of the automobile and made it accessible to the middle class. But if not for the discovery of vast oil reserves at Spindletop in 1901, which, curiously, Collier and Horowitz fail to mention, Americans, like Europeans, would probably have had to wait until the middle of the century for the automobile to become a vehicle of the people.

When he raised the wages of his workers to five dollars a day in 1913, Ford brought them out of the working class, and ingeniously created a new cohort of consumers for his product. He became a national figure overnight. For many Americans this harbinger and prophet of the modern age was, as the authors show, a comfortingly populist symbol of rural Midwestern virtues. From 1916 until the mid-1920's, a movement sprang up to draft Ford for the presidency, and in 1923 a *Collier's* poll showed him far and away the preferred potential candidate over Warren G. Harding, Herbert Hoover, Robert M. La Follette, and others.

Journalists fueled his popularity by quoting his every pronouncement on the attractions of hard work and self-discipline and trumpeted his broadsides aimed at urban sophisticates. Reporters often called upon Ford, a man ignorant of most things save the industrial production of automobiles, as if he were an elder statesman, asking his opinion of President Woodrow Wilson's latest speech or his thoughts on who was the greatest man who ever lived. The most famous American of his day, Ford wore, for a time, a disguise in public in order to avoid the crowds of the curious that followed him in the streets.

Ford's mistake may have been that of a great many public figures: he came to believe in and depend upon his reflection in the public imagination. The instrument of his rise, the press, would also help to bring him down in 1919 at the nationally publicized Mount Clemens trial of a libel suit brought by Ford against the Chicago *Tribune*. The paper had called Ford an anarchist for allegedly firing employees who took up arms in the National Guard. In the course of the trial, the auto magnate revealed to the American public the extraordinary extent of his ignorance. Ford thought that the only revolution the United States had experienced was in 1812, and insisted that "chili con carne" was properly defined as "a large mobile army." He argued that "ballyhoo" meant "a blackguard or something of that nature." After a week of humiliation Ford admitted, "I am ignorant about most things." The authors mark this trial and the ensuing public opprobrium as the turning point in Ford's life—the hayseed visionary was buried and the hardened, spidery crank was born.

Post-Mount Clemens, Ford emerged as a sort of 1920's Shirley MacLaine. Like the actress, he deployed his considerable financial resources and ability to attract the attention of the press to promote his bizarre notions: a dreary laundry list of fetishes, which Collier and Horowitz describe in great detail, that included a belief in reincarnation, an obsession with soybeans, and a liking for weed sandwiches. He washed his hair in a sink littered with old razor blades because he believed rusty water was a hair restorative.

The resemblance to Shirley MacLaine ends there. A persistent strain of cruelty manifested itself in Ford's treatment of those who worked for him. He slapped assembly-line workers on the back with extra force when he found them chewing tobacco against company orders, causing them to swallow their cud; as the poor man turned green, Crazy Henry, as he was sometimes called, would laugh hysterically. He compelled Lawrence Sheldrick, one of his top designers, to eat an enormous meal of roast pork, potatoes, and apple pie and then to take a new experimental laxative that Ford was curious

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about. His cruelty extended to his family: he humiliated his son Edsel in public, and, according to Collier and Horowitz, drove him to a premature death at forty-nine.

An anti-Semite, Henry Ford mounted an expensive hate campaign, buying the Dearborn *Independent* in 1919 as a pulpit for his attacks on the Jews. He also printed the screed *The International Jew* which became a best-seller in Germany and which in 1922, according to a New York *Times* reporter, ended up on Hitler's desk alongside a large photo of Ford. As the paper came to be filled almost exclusively with anti-Semitic attacks and descended into increasingly elaborate conspiracy theories (one involved Ford's belief that a group of Jewish bankers had hired John Wilkes Booth to kill Abraham Lincoln), public outrage mounted, until former Presidents Taft and Wilson pleaded with Ford to stop. Their entreaties met with little success; Ford ceased his campaign and apologized only when threatened with potentially embarrassing lawsuits.

Henry Ford's increasing malevolence also transformed the Ford Motor Company from one of the best-run auto manufacturers into a harsh, inefficient industrial cripple. By the early 1930's Ford had turned the Rouge River Plant into an "industrial concentration camp," overseen by an army of thugs and ex-hoods under the direction of his favorite flunky, Harry Bennett. Company rules prohibited sitting, squatting, singing, talking, or whistling on the job. Workers learned to communicate without moving their lips in what became known as the "Ford Whisper." By World War II the company was so badly run that the government seriously considered taking it over for the war effort.

If Henry Ford was a tyrant and a bully, his son Edsel, as portrayed by Collier and Horowitz, was a humane, diligent man who struggled to build a life for himself and his family while counterbalancing the elder Ford's mismanagement of the company and mistreatment of workers with his own quiet, responsible presence. Edsel's charm and decency, and the abuse he suffered at the hands of his father, in turn gave Edsel's son, Henry Ford II, a powerful sense of mission—a mission to reclaim the company from the grip of his monstrous grandfather. But as Collier and Horowitz also argue, in practice Henry Ford II oscillated between two personas: the hardworking, capable, and surprisingly resourceful businessman and the heedless, vulgar, self-indulgent brat.

In the mid-1940's, after Edsel's death, the Ford Motor Company was ruled by a senile Henry I and Harry Bennett, who were slowly edging the once enormous empire toward collapse. In a carefully orchestrated maneuver Henry II managed, with the help of his mother Eleanor, to strong-arm Henry I into stepping down and turning the company over to his grandson. After purging Bennett and his thugs, Henry II brought the Ford Motor Company into the modern age of corporate management. He lured to Ford a new class of technocrats, the "Whiz Kids," a group of ex-military officers who during the war had transformed modern air warfare by centralizing information and manipulating the inventory of bombers. By the end of the 1950's Ford and his Whiz Kids had reestablished the company as an American industrial giant.

"Hank the Deuce," as he was known in Detroit, adopted a far more conciliatory stance toward labor than that of his grandfather, and with the help of a public-relations firm earned a reputation as something of an industrial statesman—a reputation that was reinforced when he instituted a minority-recruitment plan in the late 1960's that became an industry standard.

For these gestures Henry II is here advanced as a model of a new kind of accommodating postwar American businessman. What is most striking about Henry II, however, is the narrowness of his concerns, and specifically his rejection of a great national role. He exhibited little interest in ideas, rarely read a book, and put up only a mild resistance to the leftward tilt of his family's enormous Ford Foundation, set up as a successful tax dodge by Henry I, who thought that charity was a weakness.

Hank the Deuce drank and ate to excess and behaved badly in public. At company dances he liked to get drunk and loudly ask other executives' wives to sleep with him. Still, he managed to keep his indulgences sufficiently under control to maintain his position as head of Ford Motor Company. His younger brothers, Bill and Benson, did not.

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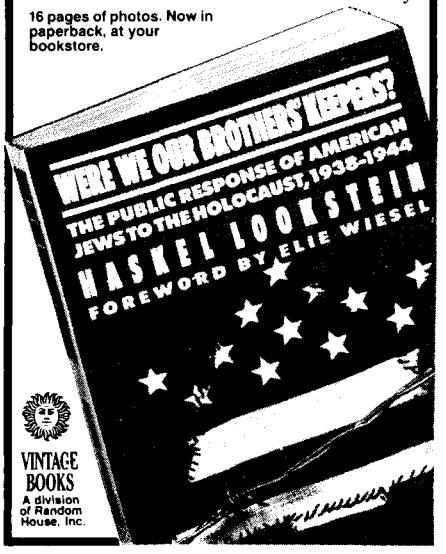
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By the end of the 1950's, realizing that they would have no prominent place in the company hierarchy, they descended into alcoholism; their antics, as well as Henry's own lengthy and expensive marriage battles with three wives, get a good deal of play here.

Collier and Horowitz also detail the endless executive spats and fights, the purges, and the rapid rises of top executives in which personality seemed to play a more important role than policy. The most enduring struggle of the postwar decade was waged between product men like Lewis Crusoe and the slick Jack Reith, who had a feel for car-making, and the ascetic "Bean Counters," the Whiz Kids, personified by Robert S. McNamara. By the end of the 1950's the Bean Counters had won out over the product men—McNamara was made president in 1960. The battle left sobering reminders of the high stakes involved in these disputes: Crusoe suffered a massive heart attack, and shortly after leaving the company in defeat, Jack Reith committed suicide. The second great corporate conflict—between Henry II and the flamboyant, ambitious Lee Iacocca—dominated the life of the company from the late 1960's until well into the 1970's, when it once again ended in victory for Henry II.

ALL dynasties must eventually fall or fade. It tells us a great deal about our expectations of the rich that a house's decline should be cause for such elaborate and extensive comment—a phenomenon, perhaps, that owes its existence not only to a persistent leveling impulse in American life, a desire to savor the misfortunes of the wealthy, but also, perversely, to the high hopes we still entertain for them.

The attention paid in his own time to Henry Ford I's every word, the desire to find in him some kind of philosopher or wise man, provides a fine illustration of a lasting American belief: that the self-made manufacturer can succeed at anything to which he applies himself. Rich men's opinions on politics, religion, and history still carry weight out of all proportion to their intrinsic importance. Americans, moreover, are probably the only people in the world to think that running a successful business is ample qualification for becoming President of the United States—a judgment expressed in the move to draft Henry Ford and surviving today in campaigns to draft such tycoons as Lee Iacocca and Donald Trump.

The Ford Motor Company, perhaps because of its connection with a single family whose founder genuinely represented universally recognized national characteristics, has always occupied a more secure and prominent place in the American imagination than its bigger and more powerful but faceless rival, General Motors. Indeed, Ford is intimately identified with America's estimate of itself and its industrial might. In his 1986 best-seller *The Reckoning*, David Halberstam chose Ford Motor Company—prematurely, it turns out—as an emblem of the crumbling U.S. economic colossus, whose weakness was encapsulated for Halberstam in the drinking and womanizing of Henry Ford II. Similarly, the authors of this book see the Fords as symbols of the capacity of power to destroy those who hold it. In their epilogue Collier and Horowitz go so far as to suggest that "the primal Ford act which welded man and machine and displaced family was destructive."

We do, indeed, learn from this account about the wreckage of the family, but in order fully to understand the relation between the power of the company machine and the internal drama of the Ford family we would have to know what the Fords themselves, a laconic bunch, felt about their relation to the automobile. One certainly gains no sense from this narrative that they partook of the erotic or romantic charge so famously an element in America's obsession with cars. At Ford they manufactured automobiles, not metaphors.

Altogether, the saga of the Ford dynasty does not afford the tidy moral of the Kennedys' attempt to become America's royal family—an attempt that, as everyone knows, ended in drugs and promiscuity. With the Fords the picture is actually not so bleak, and at the moment even has a happy ending of sorts: in 1987 the company reported record profits, and in the previous year it outearned General Motors for the first time since 1924. Possessing no metaphysical sense of national mission, the Fords did not aim as high as the Kennedys or the Rockefellers, and while there is a good deal of misfortune and cruelty in the story, all of it amply documented by Collier and Horowitz, there is also considerable accomplishment.

IN *The Fords* the heads of the family are often compared to figures from religion, myth, and fiction. Henry Ford I is "like some god of Oriental mythology—simultaneously creator and destroyer," an "Adam filled with innocence although he had just created the original sin of the modern world," a "Midas figure," a "benign monarch." Henry Ford II is like the "watchmaker god of the company." Meanwhile the real narrative focus is on the limits of power and the human weakness of the Fords and their employees, from Henry I's decline into senility and cruelty to the later intrigues, purges, and rapid ups and downs of company executives. All this makes for interesting reading, but it also renders the success of the company, the sustainer of the family fortune, somewhat unintelligible.

How did Henry I build up his organization? How did he maintain people's loyalties? Henry II's initial postwar burst of activity is vividly presented, but his subsequent role in the continued success of the company remains a mystery. What were Hank the Deuce and his executives doing in between corporate machinations and purges? Collier and Horowitz unfortunately fail to convey any lasting impression of the daily life of the company, any real sense of its ethos, or a sufficiently detailed illustration of its formula for success.

Despite these lapses, however, the authors do give us, with a novelistic flair for pacing and the effective use of anecdote, an exciting portrait that will not fail to satisfy even the heartiest appetite for the perversities and extravagances of the powerful.

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The Hermit Kingdom

KOREA AT THE CROSSROADS: IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN POLICY. REPORT OF THE KOREA STUDY GROUP. *Council on Foreign Relations/Asia Society. 62 pp. $4.95.*

Reviewed by
NICHOLAS N. EBERSTADT

LATE in the 19th century, Korea was known in the West as the "hermit kingdom." Remote, impoverished, and unwelcoming to foreign visitors, it was a nation neither greatly affected by world affairs nor particularly desirous of participating in them. Intervening events have pushed Korea from the wings of the international stage toward its center. Over the past generation, for example, South Korea has undergone a dramatic economic transformation, largely on the strength of a newly developed acumen in international markets for goods, services, and capital.

Korea's new-found prominence also stems from a less happy set of external contacts. Quite unexpectedly, the peninsula emerged as a central front in the cold war. Unwillingly partitioned after World War II, the nation watched helplessly as a Stalin-style regime was emplaced and consolidated within the Soviet zone of military occupation in its north. Soon thereafter, the peninsula was the site of a Communist surprise attack; the subsequent clash between Communist armies and United Nations forces cost perhaps two million—mainly Korean—lives. Even thirty-five years after a negotiated ceasefire, the enduring state of war between the South and the Communist North requires 40,000 American troops and a U.S. nuclear deterrent (nominally under a continuing United Nations command) to maintain a precarious peace.

In December, considerable international attention was focused on South Korea's presidential elections—the first open and genuinely competitive ones in the Republic's forty years (indeed, in Korea's entire history). Still more international attention may be expected as the Republic of Korea inaugurates its new President—marking the first peaceful transfer of internal power in the peninsula since the days of the Yi emperors—and as the 1988 Olympics open in Seoul in August.

Though Korea's economic, political, and strategic significance has increased vastly since 1945, the same cannot be said of foreign understanding of the area. Indeed, there is a striking disproportion today between Korea's international importance and the capacity of overseas "experts" to fathom the region. The difficulty of the Korean language, the hermetic nature of the North, the jealous interest that a succession of South Korean governments has taken in managing the "truth," and, until quite recently, the informal but automatic denial of official access in Seoul to writers and scholars who let the chips fall where they might, are among the reasons for the current paucity of useful and informative literature about Korea. As a result, readers searching for reliable guidance in this consequential and potentially volatile peninsula will find it generally lacking.

A slim volume, recently released, will be of assistance in this respect. *Korea at the Crossroads: Implications for American Policy* presents the conclusions and recommendations of a sixteen-member Korea Study Group co-sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society, and chaired by Kenneth W. Dam, formerly Deputy Secretary of State in the Reagan administration.

Many members of this seven-month project had no prior expertise in Korean affairs. Several held

NICHOLAS N. EBERSTADT *is a visiting fellow at Harvard's Center for Population Studies and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. He was in Korea during last December's presidential elections as part of a viewer team sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy.*

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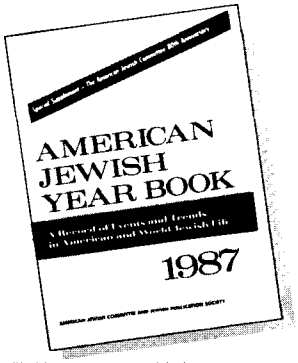

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key diplomatic posts during the Carter years—when U.S.-South Korean relations underwent a sudden, sharp, and fortunately temporary deterioration. Such seemingly inauspicious portents notwithstanding, the report demonstrates considerable knowledge of Korea's current situation, reflects some insight into Korean affairs, and contains a number of sensible recommendations. No less important, *Korea at the Crossroads* commits to paper many of the commonplace observations about Korea frequently mouthed by diplomats but almost never publicly uttered.

THE report examines South Korean politics, the Korean economy, and the peninsula's security questions. Its economic section is the strongest of the three. Unlike some discussions of the Korean economy, which have mistaken it for a "free-market" miracle, *Korea at the Crossroads* recognizes the pivotal role of the state in managing and directing Korea's development. "Saving foreign exchange and controlling economic decisions," in the words of the report, "are habits ingrained in the . . . bureaucracy." Thanks in part to these habits, South Korea is one of the few Third World countries whose external indebtedness has *declined* during the 1980's (from $47 billion in 1985 to $35 billion in mid-1987, according to the numbers in the report).

But foreign debt, evoking as it does emotive visions of "dependence" in the Korean imagination, is an issue of extreme political sensitivity in the South. (The issue is made all the more salient by the fact that South Korea's external debt is overwhelmingly "public"—contracted for and borrowed by the government itself.) Unlike in many parts of the contemporary Third World, where indebted governments can play upon the rhetoric of repudiation, there seems in Korea to be a genuine groundswell of opinion favoring the retiring of foreign financial obligations. Yet the urge to retire this debt comes into conflict with American calls for trade liberalization in Korea (since trade liberalization would probably lower the Republic's current-account surpluses, and thus reduce its capacity to amortize borrowed funds).

South Korea's ongoing "democratization" is not likely to lessen these tensions. As the report notes, "Several Koreans told us that whatever the outcome of the [December 1987 presidential] elections, . . . populist issues . . . will be more important [and] one result of this trend would be to make trade liberalization more difficult. . . ." According to "some Korean policymakers and scholars," only U.S. pressure has "brought about change in Korean [trade] policies." To the extent that this is true, domestic relaxation in Seoul might raise the prospects of economic confrontations abroad—particularly with the Republic's most important ally.

The chapter on security recommends that both American and Korean ground forces be placed "under the operational control of a Korean in peacetime," after South Korea's newly elected President comes into office. That proposal is offered not in order to improve the operational effectiveness of the combined defense forces but instead with an eye toward quelling what the report correctly takes to be stirrings of anti-Americanism in the South.

Unfortunately, *Korea at the Crossroads* seems to pay less careful attention to the political climate in the *North*—the source of the threat that has occasioned the American military presence in Korea these past four decades. The report acknowledges, for example, the improvement in Soviet-North Korean relations that has taken place since late 1983, yet it seems to ascribe no particular significance to this warming trend. Much of the language of the security chapter, moreover, seems to suggest that South Korea, and America, seek something like "détente" with Pyongyang. But relaxation of tensions on the peninsula, if it occurs, will derive not from Western attempts to influence atmospherics but through real changes in the North, and corresponding emendations in its external behavior.

A SIMILARLY simple but basic point eludes the report's generally perceptive discussions of what it terms South Korea's "turn toward a more democratic future." Plebiscites may have been held, constitutions drafted, and legal codes enacted, but South Korea is a country that has to date been ruled not by laws but by men. The gap between the Republic's written laws and their general enforcement is still profound. (In Korean traffic accidents, for example, the driver of the smaller car is typically the one booked and arraigned, no matter what the facts of the matter.) Ironically, this circumstance is only once mentioned in *Korea at the Crossroads*—and then in connection with the problems that U.S. corporations have encountered in exercising their local rights under Korean law.

One might have expected that a report so evidently interested in encouraging Korea to proceed along a democratic course might have ascribed greater import to the salutary properties of the rule of law. It is striking (but perhaps not surprising) that neither local opponents of the Seoul government nor "human-rights" activists overseas have made this an issue in their many criticisms of South Korea. The rule of law evidently does not excite the utopian imagination, nor does it square with ambitious visions of capturing and overturning the state. Quite the contrary: to the extent that it can guarantee the protection of property and person and secure inviolable liberties for the individual, the rule of law is antithetical to the ambitions of would-be masters of the people.

Without the rule of law, however, South Korea's contentious factions cannot hope to coalesce into a single political community. As long as South Korea lacks the political cohesion that such a community would provide, North Korea's dictators can continue to entertain plans of marching south at some future date to pick up the pieces when a Seoul regime collapses into chaos. Unless and until American observers and officials appreciate the consequence of the rule of law for Korea, the American approach to this heavily armed peninsula will be dangerously uninformed.

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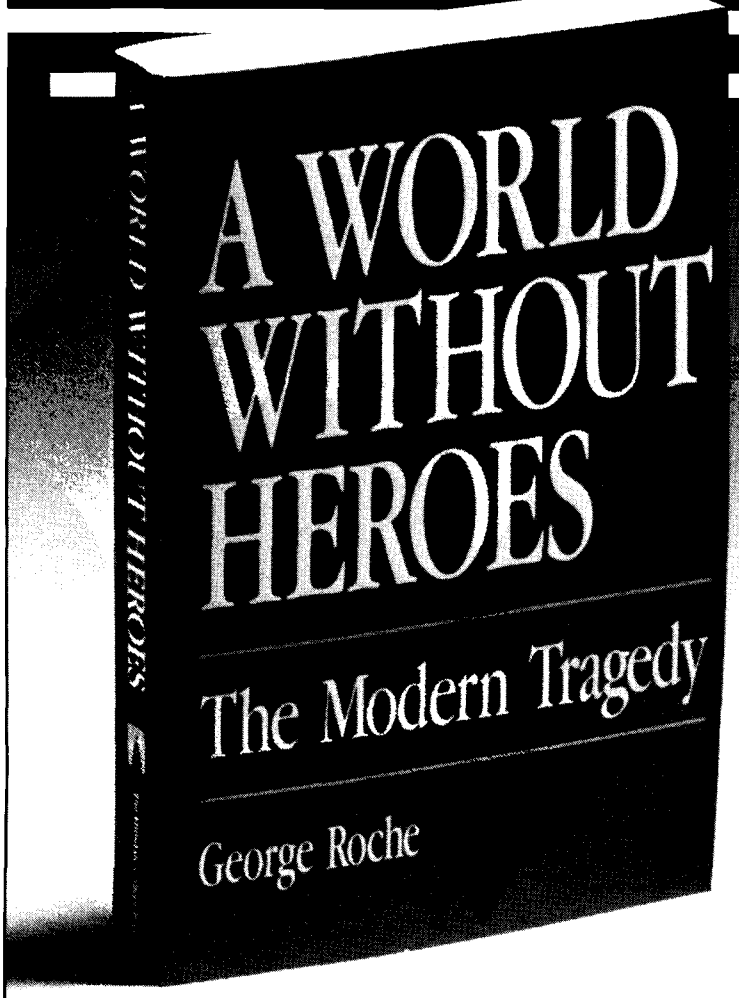

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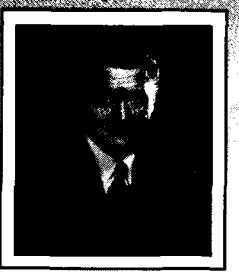
By George Roche

Foreword By Russell Kirk



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In the Crucible

TIMEBENDS: A LIFE. By ARTHUR MILLER. *Grove Press. 614 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES W. TUTTLETON

ARTHUR MILLER'S new autobiography, *Timebends: A Life,* is so chronologically scrambled an account of his family, friendships, marriages, and theatrical and political activities that to sort out the temporal sequence of events is likely to give the reader a bad case of "the rapture of the deep." Far from a conventional memoir that narrates events as they occurred, *Timebends* reads like a psychoanalyst's case notes of a prolonged free association.

Born in New York City in 1915, Arthur Miller grew up in a wealthy family in what was then Jewish Harlem. His father, a successful, if uneducated, clothing manufacturer, cruised down to the garment district each day by limousine and provided his family with such extraordinary privileges that his guilty son later felt obliged to assert a defiant political egalitarianism. It was Miller's mother, a better educated and culturally ambitious woman, who first introduced her son to the world of theater and art. Young Miller saw his first play at the age of eight at the Shubert theater on Lenox Avenue at 115th Street. If the experience taught him that "there were two kinds of reality," that of the stage was ever after "far more real."

Certainly the reality of the theater was more substantial than the family's financial status, which collapsed in the Depression. Nevertheless, Miller was able to attend the University of Michigan, where he won two Hopwood Awards in playwriting that launched him toward the theatrical successes of *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953), *A View from the Bridge* (1956), *After the Fall* (1964), *Incident at Vichy* (1964), and a number of lesser works.

Timebends offers a rich account of Miller's reflections about the drama as an art form and about the Broadway stage, where his major works premiered. (At the same time, it features sharply etched vignettes of theater personalities like Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, Elia Kazan, Lee and Paula Strasberg, and John Huston. And, of course, the drama of his five years as Marilyn Monroe's husband gets extended treatment.) Ever didactic, Miller began his career on the principle that "an amoral art was a contradiction and that an artist was obliged to point a way out [of social conflicts] if he thought he knew what it was." Throughout the Depression years of the 1930's, Miller thought he knew the way out: socialism. Embracing Marx with a blind abandon, Miller found in "the concept of a classless society" a "disarming sweetness"; it evoked what he still calls "the generosity of youth." He even married a Gentile girl, Mary Slattery, partly because "I was struggling to identify myself with mankind rather than one small tribal fraction of it."

He was convinced, in any case, that socialism "was reason"; and although it was common knowledge that Stalin had murdered millions of peasants, assassinated his rivals, and staged mock trials to purge party regulars, Miller still believed that "it was the Soviet Union that upheld reason's light by doing what was best for the majority." So complete was his submission to this party line that he could see Franklin D. Roosevelt as "merely improvising to fend off the day of complete collapse. All that could save us was harsh reason and socialism."

As with so many other American writers seduced by the utopian appeal of Marxism, Miller's faith was destined to be shattered—it was the 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact, he says, that produced his particular "end to innocence." And this disillusionment was doubly compounded when later, during the McCarthy era, he was called to testify about his Communist associations. (Refusing to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950's, he was convicted and sentenced to jail, but the conviction was overturned on appeal.) Disillusioned or no, however, Miller has remained a man for whom art "ought to be of use in changing society."

Thus he could not, he writes, "imagine a theater worth my time that did not want to change the world." In line with this mandate, *All My Sons* undertook to expose the limitations of a narrowly familial or tribal set of loyalties and to celebrate universal humanitarianism and the brotherhood of all men. *Death of a Salesman* was meant to be "a time bomb" under what Miller calls "the bullshit of capitalism, this pseudo-life that thought to touch the clouds by standing on top of a refrigerator, waving a paid-up mortgage at the moon, victorious at last." And in *The Crucible* he attacked the government's anti-Communist hearings in an allegory of the witchhunts in Puritan Salem in 1692.

THAT a number of his plays were controversial and often unpopular with New York audiences (*Death of a Salesman* is an exception) leads Miller roundly to condemn nearly everyone involved with his productions: audiences, actors, producers, directors, executive boards, newspaper critics, and academics. The New York stage he describes at one point as "a temple being rotted out with commercialized junk" because the audience wants only entertainment, not serious drama, because the moneyed backers will not gamble on serious quality, and because the critics, especially those at the New York *Times*, are mindless assassins of art: "the theater we have is the theater the critics have permitted us to have, since they filter out what they consider we ought not see, enforcing laws that have never been written, laws, among others, of taste and even ideological content."

According to Miller, "the contemporary American repertoire . . . represents the taste of whoever is writing the New York *Times* review, only slightly mitigated by other reviews." Hence, the "theater community [is] on its knees before a single great newspaper," a condition which for him is "a dictatorship as effective as any cultural control mechanism in the world." He has the audacity to compare this

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JAMES W. TUTTLETON, *whose review of William Safire's* Freedom *appeared last month, is professor of English at NYU.*

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state of affairs with that in the Soviet Union: "Indeed, when the Soviets close down a show, it is a committee that makes the decision, rather than one man—at least since Stalin died."

In short, Arthur Miller is a wounded man: for him, "the story of American playwrights" is "awfully repetitious—the celebratory embraces soon followed by rejection or contempt, and this without exception for any playwright who takes risks and does not comfortably repeat himself." A sign of his bitterness is the remark that "the often frivolous junking of years of work after a single thoughtless review [has] cast a pall of futility over the enterprise of writing plays, at least for me. And I am sure I am not alone in this." One may doubt that New York theater reviewers are in fact as thoughtless as Miller claims them to be. What is evident from passages like this is that he is rarely willing to contemplate the possibility of imperfections in his own plays.

THE most surprising aspect of *Timebends* is Miller's psychoanalysis of his own life. He remarks that he began analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein, "a Freudian of great skill," but decided that "it was ultimately impossible for me to risk my creativity, which he was wise enough not to pretend to understand, by vacating my own autonomy, however destructive it might continue to be." Nevertheless, few autobiographies are so full as this one of psychoanalytic palaver—terms like "sublimation," "the return of the repressed," "narcissism," "denial," "Oedipal parricide," and the like.

As Miller recounts it, his maturation as a writer meant coming to a knowledge of what, in the Miller family romance, inspired his writing. Composing plays, he tells us, was his means of claiming "the feminine blessing that was the spring of [his] creativity, the infinite benediction of woman, a felicity in the deepest heart of man, as unmaterial, unrepayable, and needful as the sky." The "sources of my art," he reveals, lay "in the sensuousness of a female blessing":

> It was of course the mother, the first audience—actually the concept of her in a most primordial sense that perhaps only the boy-child, half lover and half rebel against her dominion, really knows in his mythifying blood.

His father Isidore, the illiterate "cloakie," had thus a rival son who could surpass him—but only by the power of his writing. Miller discloses that he was secretly ashamed of his writing, as though it were "a sexual secret," and so indeed it was, for behind his sexual anxieties "lay incestuous stains that spread toward sister and mother." In writing, in art, he found at least a partial means of resolving the tension.

It is astonishing, in the light of passages like the one just quoted, that Miller expresses such an emphatic aversion to psychoanalytic understanding, and indeed states that he "could not help suspecting that psychoanalysis was [for other people] a form of alienation that was being used as a substitute not only for Marxism but for social activism of any kind." What *Timebends* suggests is that Freud served just this purpose for him. Not only are we to understand that his plays originated out of his Oedipal fantasies, but even his radical politics —now for the most part abandoned—are claimed to be an expression of his psychosexual conflicts with his father:

> For deep down in the comradely world of the Marxist promise is parricide. For those who are psychically ready for that age-old adventure, the sublimation of violence that Marxism offers is nearly euphoric in its effects; while extolling the rational, it blows away the restraints on the Oedipal furies, clothing their violence with a humane ideal. Its impact brings to mind Jesus' direction to his disciples to turn away even from their parents in order to follow him, for it really is impossible to serve two masters, and in his words too there is a shadow of hidden parricide.

Non-Freudians may be permitted to question that such a shadow lies at the heart of the Christian message of self-sacrificing love. But in any case, are we seriously to believe that our century's horde of revolutionary Marxists, who have destroyed whole societies and murdered huge populations, have been merely the maladjusted products of Oedipal problems with Dad? Or that this explains the Marxist political motivations of guilt-ridden middle-class intellectuals like Miller?

There is no doubt, however, that despite his protestations to the contrary, Miller is himself a convert to Freud, and to a Freudian understanding of the origins of his own art. Indeed, considering the weakness of his recent work—*The Creation of the World and Other Business, The Archbishop's Ceiling, The American Clock*, and *Danger: Memory*—I for one am left wondering whether his appropriation of this Freudian structure of ideas may not have drained his powers as a playwright.

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